BULLETIN
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Chicago Herpetological Society

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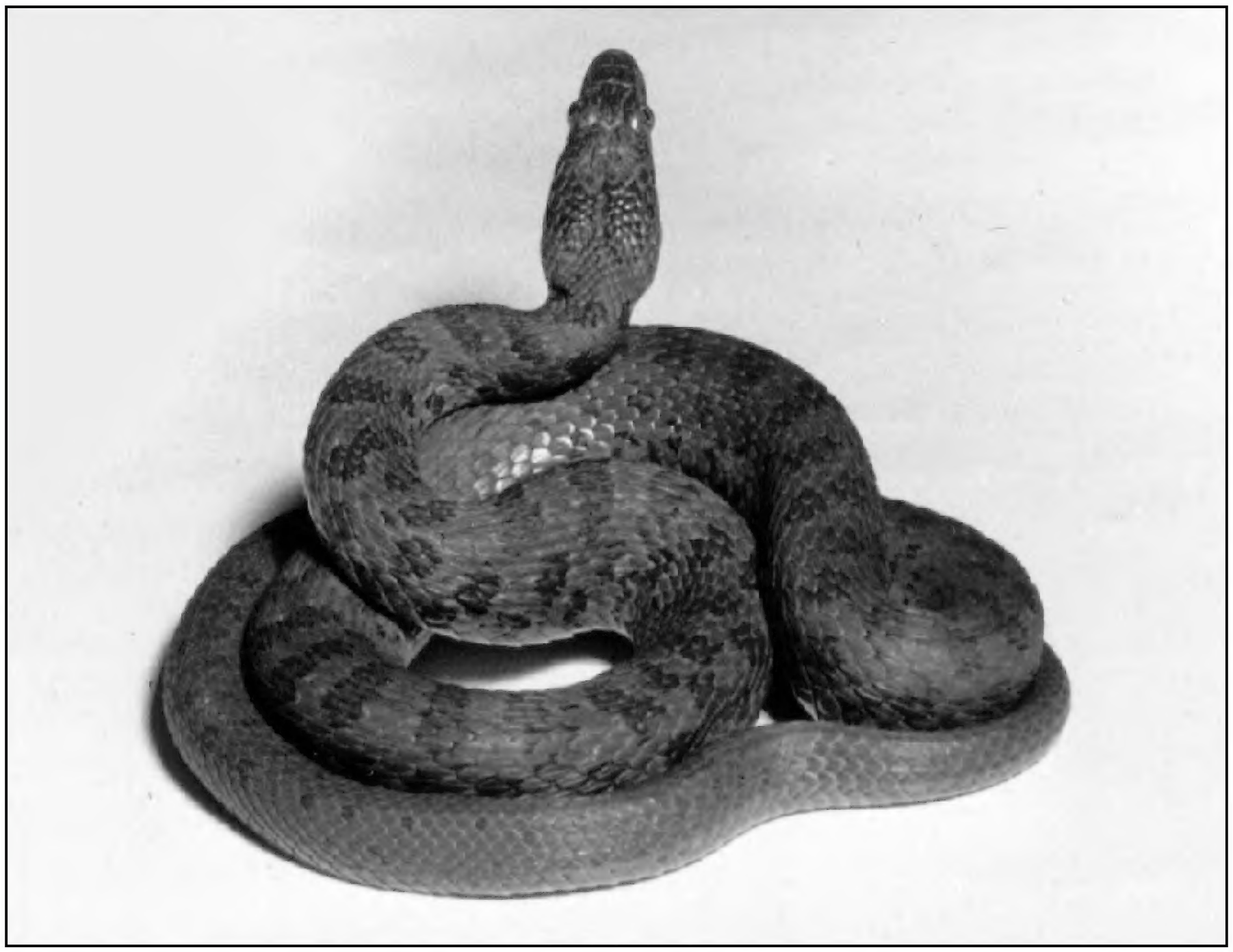

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Cover: A narrow-headed garter snake, *Thamnophis rufipunctatus*, collected by Roger Conant south of Creel, Chihuahua, Mexico, on September 13, 1967. Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.

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In 1991 and again in 1994 the Bulletin *was privileged to publish chapters from the memoirs-in-progress of Dr. Roger Conant. Dr. Conant, as almost all of you surely know, is one of the preeminent herpetologists of our time. He is a former Director of the Philadelphia Zoo. Through three editions,* A Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America *has been the best selling and most widely used book in herpetology, a familiar companion to several generations of amateur and professional naturalists. Another magnum opus, written in collaboration with Dr. Howard K. Gloyd and published by the SSAR in 1990, was* Snakes of the Agkistrodon Complex: A Monographic Review. *To attempt to list all of Roger Conant's accomplishments and publications is far beyond the scope of this brief introduction.*

Dr. Conant was made an honorary member of the Chicago Herpetological Society when it was founded in 1966. Ever since, he has somehow found the time to support our organization in concrete ways: through letters of encouragement, through articles for the Bulletin, *and in October 1993 by speaking at a CHS meeting.*

The good news is that Dr. Conant's autobiography is being published at last, under the lighthearted title A Field Guide to the Life and Times of Roger Conant. *And for the third time the* Bulletin *is honored to include a chapter from this work. As you read, bear in mind that the full book contains more than 500 pages, including at least 59 chapters that you have not yet read.* A Field Guide to the Life and Times of Roger Conant *is available from Canyonlands Publishing Group, P.O. Box 1957, Sandy UT 84091-1957. A promotional flyer including details of cost and how to order will be inserted in this* Bulletin *(or, if the timing doesn't work out, in next month's* Bulletin*).*

The Great Barrancas

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During the late 1950s and early 1960s, when we were visiting Mexico annually for many weeks of fieldwork, Copper Canyon, or the Barranca del Cobre, to use its proper name, was a legendary, inaccessible place in southwestern Chihuahua. Only a few outsiders equipped with large four-wheel-drive vehicles had ever braved the so-called road to get to it. They had to carry all their own gasoline, water, and food, and they had to be able to extricate themselves from deep mud or sand, and take care of breakdowns and other emergencies. It was not for us, of course, with our little Volkswagen Kamper. We never expected to see the Barranca del Cobre, but then came the Chihuahua al Pacifíco railroad. It not only reached the renowned canyon, but plunged right down into it on a cliff-hanging engineering masterpiece that conveyed passengers and freight all the way to Los Mochis in the western lowlands. Would we ever ride on it?

Our opportunity came in 1967. We were back in the Big Bend National Park seeking live herps to photograph for illustrations in the considerably expanded second edition of our "Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians." The previous year, while we were pursuing the same objective, we had learned that one could board a train in the prosperous little Mexican city of Ojinaga just across the Rio Grande from the decaying Texas town of Presidio. Why not take some time off and treat ourselves to the train trip of a lifetime? We did, but before relating our experiences, let me first mention something about the great barrancas of western Mexico. The Spanish word *barranca*, which translates as "gorge," is in common use in our Southwest.

The *altiplano* (high plateau), the vast interior plain of much of Mexico north of the transvolcanic belt, is flanked by two mountain ranges, the Sierra Madre Oriental (east) and the Sierra Madre Occidental (west). That is an oversimplification, because there are also small, isolated mountains and other topographic variations on the *altiplano*. Not all of it is flat by any means. Toward the west, the area with which we are concerned, the Sierra Madre Occidental is not very impressive. It seems but little higher in many places than the *altiplano* itself. When viewed from the other side, along Mexico's western Coastal Plain, however, the range is a spectacular, deeply dissected escarpment.

The western Sierra rose as the result of an outpouring of vast amounts of volcanic material over a period of millions of years, dating well back in the Tertiary. Since then, erosion has created many deep canyons that rival and even exceed our own Grand Canyon in both depth and width. The Barranca del Cobre, the largest of them all, is a complex of several huge gorges that collectively form a void four times larger and 280 feet deeper than the Grand Canyon. The railroad, which previously had its terminus southwest of Ciudad Chihuahua at the miniscule village of Creel, was not completed until 1961.

Isabelle and I had already seen much of Mexico. It seemed fitting to top off our adventures south of the border by experiencing one of the world's great chasms.

Ojinaga was our point of departure for the train trip across Mexico. Sanborn's Travel Agency, which specialized in schedules and accommodations in Mexico, had a tiny office in Presidio, attended on appointment by a lady resident of the town. That was where we made our reservations and bought our train tickets.

We prepared carefully for our excursion. We would be on

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our own, and our jim-dandy Volkswagen Kamper, with all its varied equipment and cubbyholes full of possible necessities, would be left behind in Presidio. Besides blue jeans, heavy footgear, and other field togs, we would need more presentable clothing, especially since I needed to get my collecting permit validated in Ciudad Chihuahua en route. Also, because we would be at a fairly high altitude in mid-September, we took along our heavy *sarapes*, which had served us well in several upland parts of Mexico.

The carpenters at the Philadelphia Zoo built me a sturdy, but lightweight, carrying case equipped with shelves on which I could carry bottles and ventilated cans for any livestock we might catch and wish to bring back with us. There was also room for a canteen, iodine capsules for water purification, first-aid supplies, and various odds and ends. On the bottom shelf I had a small bottle of formaldehyde and all the necessary tools for preserving any salvageable specimens we might find dead or injured. My fishing pole, with its lizard noose, came apart and was easily stowed. The only awkward item was my golf putter made into a snake hook. Our baggage was rather bulky, but we wanted to be ready for anything and everything.

On September 6, 1967, we left the old K-Bar Ranch, our headquarters in the Big Bend National Park, about 9:30 A.M. and drove west toward Presidio. Isabelle had made sandwiches, and we estimated we would reach Closed Canyon at about lunchtime. We had already walked inward for quite a distance in that narrow cleft in the rock wall, which runs all the way from the road to the Rio Grande, or so we were told. Aside from a single canyon lizard, *Sceloporus merriami*, we saw nothing of interest, and, probably because the atmosphere was so claustrophobic, we didn't stay long. Nevertheless, it was a good place to pull off the road while we ate our lunch, changed our clothes, and repacked. Our plan was excellent, but we nearly came to grief. I'll let Isabelle tell the story, which I quote from her diary:

> When we turned off the highway we found the canyon road badly washed out in places, and we couldn't get down all the way to park. Roger started to back up and then pull into a smooth side road when, suddenly the car gave a terrific lurch and the front end hung up in the air. He had driven too close to a washout on the right side and the right rear wheel had gone into a deep ditch. This was certainly the worst calamity that had ever befallen us in all our years of driving over rough roads. It was impossible to extricate the car by ourselves.

The fault was entirely mine. I thought I had ample room, but I should have asked Isabelle to get out and guide me, a routine we had carefully heeded, no matter which one of us was driving, during our many years of travel in the wilds of Mexico.

We had passed a road crew a mile or so before we arrived at the Closed Canyon turnoff, so I hitchhiked back and sought their help. The men were eating when I arrived, but, as soon as they finished, they responded to my pleas, and I rode back with them. They piled up stones under our right rear wheel to make a crude ramp, fastened a heavy tow chain to the hook on the frame of our Kamper, pulled with their truck, and had us back on the level in a jiffy. We were both shaken by the mishap, but the men refused to accept anything in the way of a gratuity. They knew they had our grateful thanks. We were also grateful that the Kamper didn't seem to be damaged.

Happily, there were no other untoward incidents on that trip. We ate and changed our clothes and were in Presidio early enough to visit some students at the local Texas A&M research station. We had a substantial snack at the Oil Flyer Restaurant, and then drove to the home of the Sanborn's agent. She provided a parking space for the Kamper during our absence, and then telephoned for a taxi in Ojinaga to come get us. The driver took us to the Oficina de Migración to have our tourist permits stamped, and then drove us out of town to the railroad station. He explained in Spanish that it was situated close to where the Mexican tracks could meet those on a bridge that crossed to connect with the Santa Fe Railroad on the American side. We were aboard before 5:00 P.M., moved our watches back an hour (to mountain time), and we soon were off.

The train had comfortable seats that reclined like those in airplanes. The windows were exceptionally wide, they had just been washed, and visibility was perfect. It was a Fiat (Italian) train, and we were riding, now that the barranca link was finished, on the last major railroad to be built in North America. The scenery across the Chihuahuan Desert was more or less monotonous, but there were distant mountains, and the few little towns through which we passed reminded us of our travels in rural, arid Mexico. It was dark when we arrived in Ciudad Chihuahua, and we didn't have dinner until we reached the Hotel Fermont at 9:30 P.M. (10:30 stomach time, according to Isabelle).

The next morning we went looking for the office of the Fauna Silvestre (the wildlife department), which had to validate my collecting permit. It turned out to be quite a chore. First we were directed to a large government building several blocks from the hotel. It was the wrong place. We were shunted across the street, but that was also incorrect. An obliging clerk, however, made several telephone calls, and he finally was able to tell us where to go. The office we wanted was in an unimposing edifice, on the second floor above an auto repair shop. The *jefe* (chief) didn't arrive for half an hour, and then he was too busy to see us. So we cooled our heels in a dingy waiting room for the better part of an hour before a typist prepared the profusion of copies of forms that had to be sent to all the agency's representatives in the State of Chihuahua. What red tape! The Mexicans must have visited Washington, D.C., and discovered how things are done in our officialdom. In previous years it had been a simple matter for me to obtain a collecting permit that was good anywhere in Mexico. All I needed to do was to write a letter outlining my field plans and stating the purpose of my research.

With the morning shot, to use a bit of slang, we lunched at the hotel, and then, because we knew we would have a long hard day on the morrow, we took a nap. A band playing music awakened us. It was in the park next to the hotel, so we pulled two chairs up to our fourth-floor window and had front-row seats. When the band finished, we were treated to an acrobatic exhibition by a group of *voladores* (high flyers). I take the following from Isabelle's diary:

> There was a large crowd of people on the sidewalks and in a nearby church plaza. Soon five men in ancient period costumes started doing a sedate dance under a pole at least 50 feet high with a tiny platform on top. One of the men played a peculiar instrument, a small reed with a little drum at the end of it on which he beat with a stick. One by one the men climbed almost to the top with the aid of a rope. The last was the man with the musical instrument. The climax came when the other four men launched themselves into space and were lowered to the ground by slowly unwinding ropes as the whole top revolved. Meantime the musician played and danced on the platform, which was no larger than his two feet. He came down last, using a rope.

There were other performances, too, and we presumed that the local merchants had hired the acts to drum up business. After all, Independence Day, September 16, was only a little more than a week away. How like our own vendors, who commercialize every holiday, even religious ones.

The following morning we were up at 4:30, had breakfast, and were waiting with our baggage when a Sanborn's man picked us up for the trip to the station. Our reserved train seats were on the shady side, which was a help on that bright, sunny day. First we crossed a rolling landscape but, as we climbed gradually higher, the desert vegetation gave way to juniper and pine. We stopped at a few small settlements, including Creel near the Continental Divide, where we planned to stay for several days on our return trip. It was a tiny place, but its environs, partially forested and with picturesque rocks and ridges, looked mighty inviting to a dyed-in-the-wool pair of naturalists. We surely would have fun exploring when we came back.

The next stop was at the upper end of the Barranca del Cobre, where we detrained for 15 minutes to have a look at the beginning of the great chasm. The broad steps down to the viewing point were lined with Tarahumara Indians selling tortillas, fruit, minerals, and even live chipmunks.

The ride down to the coast was worthy of all the superlatives that can be heaped upon it. A 1994 advertisement for the Discovery Tours of the American Museum of Natural History summed it up succinctly:

MEXICO'S COPPER CANYON BY TRAIN

A rail journey through Mexico's mammoth and scenic Copper Canyon, or Barranca del Cobre, is one of the most breathtaking journeys in the world. Over four times the size of the Grand Canyon, Barranca del Cobre is a natural marvel best experienced along a rail route itself considered a marvel of engineering. Explore a remarkable region that has long been home to the Tarahumara, an isolated people whose ability to traverse rugged terrain on foot is legendary.

Breathtaking, indeed. We found ourselves frequently moving along narrow ledges on steep or almost vertical precipices. We crossed long and spidery trestles, and in one small section of the route, near Témoris, the track made a bewildering series of switchbacks and hairpin turns. We passed through 86 tunnels, if we counted correctly. What scenery! Vast panoramas across to the opposite wall of the great barranca, waterfalls, boulder-strewn streams, and an ever-changing series of rock formations. What a trip. We didn't hesitate to recommend it to anyone.

We were in Los Mochis, a sizable town on the Coastal Plain at 7:30 P.M., set our watches back another hour to be on Pacific time, and we ate and slept in the Santa Anita Hotel.

The next morning we accompanied a small group of fellow train passengers on a Sanborn's tour to Topolobampo. That was where we had made our landfall aboard the steamer *San Jorge* in 1961 after we drove our Kamper to the southern tip of Baja California (see "The Classic Loop Road"). What an adventure that had been. There was no paving in those days, and we sometimes found ourselves negotiating what could best be described as goat trails. When our 1967 tour arrived at Topolobampo, we saw the steamer *Viosca*, which took over the run to La Paz after the *San Jorge* sank. Our group boarded a cabin cruiser for a trip on the bay, and we again saw boobies and dolphins, which had delighted us six years previously. It was a nostalgic day for us.

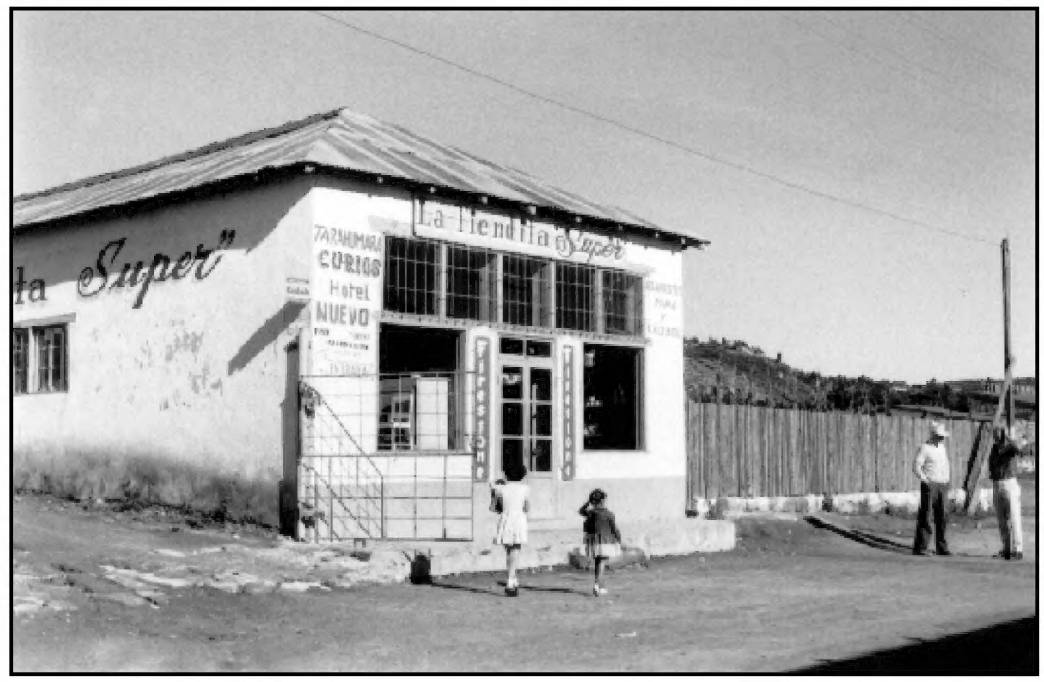
In the evening we got down to business again. I hired a taxi in Los Mochis, and we did some road-running in the dark. The driver, who spoke no English, soon entered into the spirit of things, and he helped us to spot toads on the paving. Most had been mashed flat by passing traffic, light though it was, but I collected four live *Bufo mazatlanensis* and a small *Bufo marinus*. The only snakes were both dead: a garter snake, *Thamnophis cyrtopsis collaris*, which I pickled; and a speckled racer, *Drymobius margaritiferus fistulosus*, which was in such poor condition that I left it for the next scavenger that might come along.

The following day, September 10, we rode the train upward and were met in the late afternoon at Creel by Señor Ricardo Dominguez Quezada, with whom I had corresponded before we left home. He had the only accommodations for visitors in the entire town. He led us across the tracks to his Hotel Nuevo and to our room, which was spotless but definitely primitive, even to lacking a toilet seat in the miniscule bathroom. He remedied that omission by transferring one from another room. Meals were served in the back of a small general store, La Tiendita Super, by his wife who, as Isabelle put it, had five and one-half children, because she was obviously pregnant.

Señor Dominguez was a former schoolteacher who was kind enough to correct my Spanish now and then, but he had become an entrepreneur, and he earned our admiration. He had done much of the work on the motel and store himself, and he had the vision to realize that Creel, situated on the scenic railroad and close to the Barranca del Cobre, offered an excellent opportunity for future tourism. His *tiendita* had a variety of goods for sale. Among the customers were Tarahumaras, who obtained such things as salt and pieces of cloth in exchange for violins they handcrafted themselves, which Dominguez sold to tourists. We bought one and a bow, and Isabelle, who had been exposed to the violin when she was a girl, coaxed a tune from it.

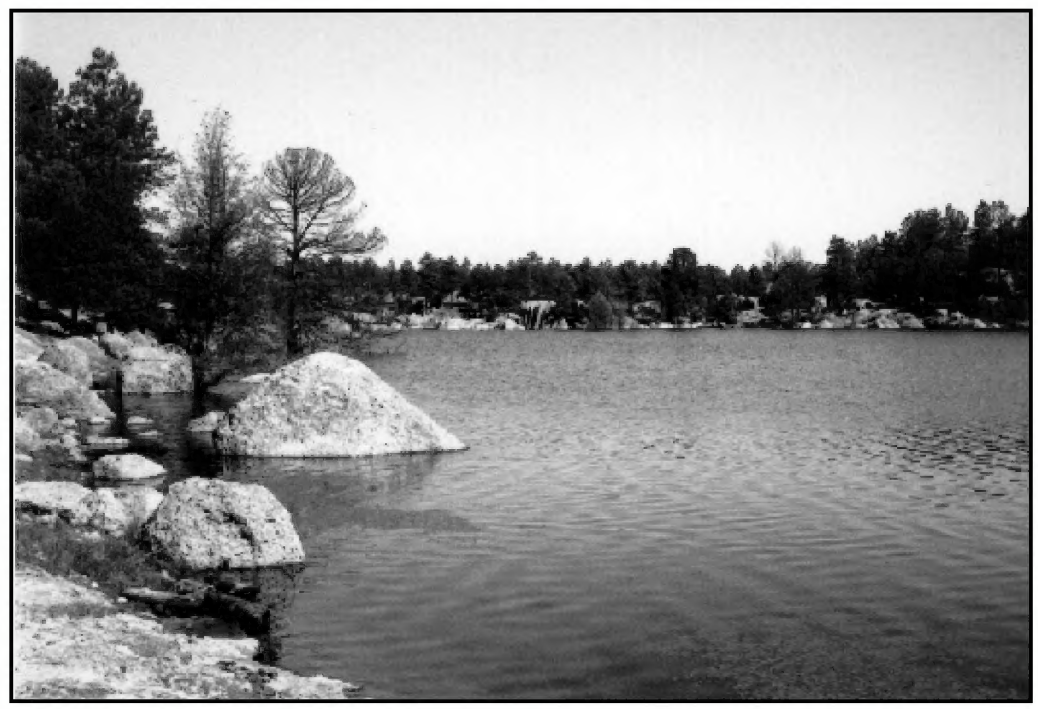
It was cold at night in Creel, which was at an elevation of 7325 feet and close to the Continental Divide (8056 feet). So

Passenger train stopped at the station in Creel, Chihuahua. A Tarahumara Indian (lower right corner) beat a hasty retreat when he turned and saw Isabelle's camera. Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.

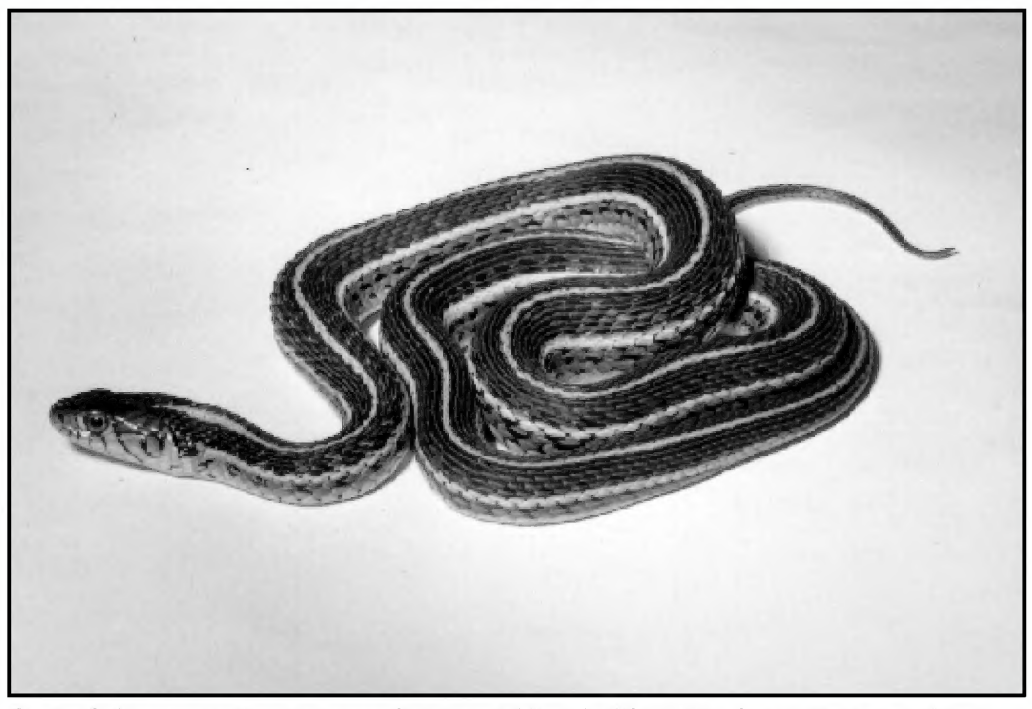


La Tiendita Super (the superior little store) operated by Señor Dominguez and his family at Creel, Chihuahua. Beneath the wording advertising "Tarahumara Curios" and the "Hotel Nuevo," the small lettering reads, in English, "Free Tourist Information." Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.

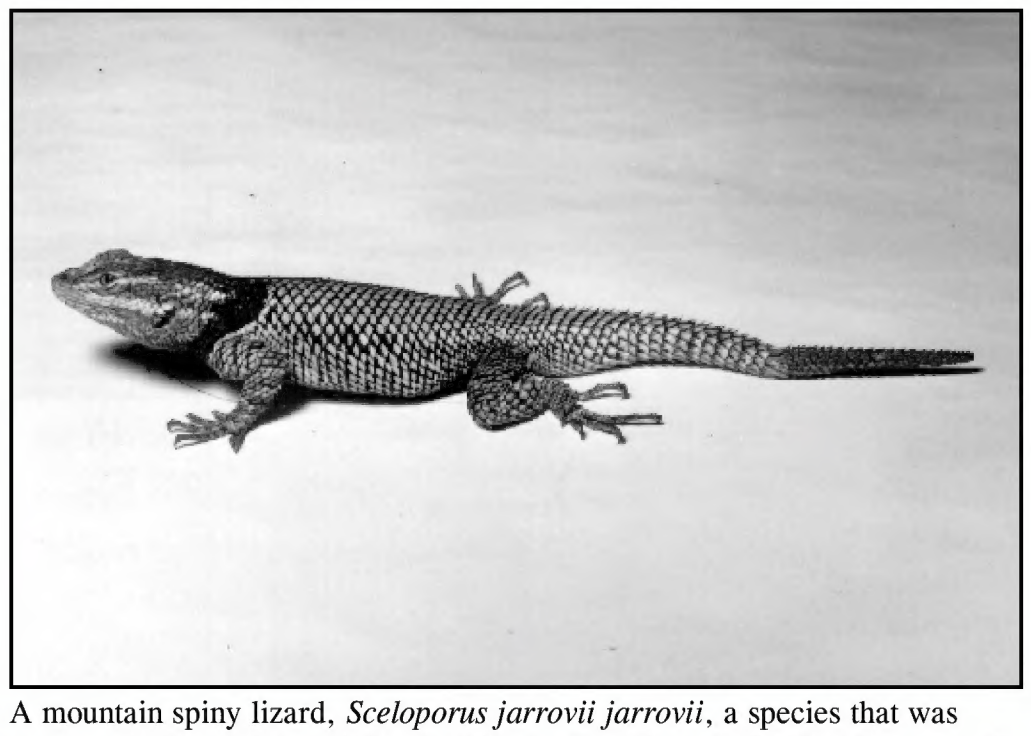
Road's End! A giant fallen boulder effectively blocked the road from the city of Chihuahua to the isolated, upland village of Creel. It was only a dirt road, but for many years it was the only means of access from the outside world. Eventually the railroad was built to Creel, and later down through the awesome Barranca del Cobre to the west coast. The sightseeing vehicle belonged to Señor Dominguez, who transported the Conants to several parts of the nearby Chihuahuan highlands. Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.



The Laguna Arareco south of Creel in western Chihuahua and near the continental divide. In a shallow marshy part of the shoreline Roger found several specimens of *Thamnophis eques virgatenuis*, which he had described as a new subspecies in 1963. Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.



One of the several narrow-striped and blue-bellied Mexican garter snakes caught at the Laguna Arareco south of Creel, Chihuahua, on September 11, 1967. Roger Conant had described this upland race as a new subspecies, *Thamnophis eques virgatenuis*, in 1963. Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.



A mountain spiny lizard, *Sceloporus jarrovii jarrovii*, a species that was common in the vicinity of Creel. This is an adult male that had lost part of its tail and grown a new one shorter and darker in color. Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.

we were mighty glad we had brought along our heavy *sarapes*. The outdoor temperatures dropped into the 30s (36°F one morning), and the only heat in our room was from a wood-burning stove that went out during the night. There was hot water, but we had to let it run for a full five minutes before it began to get warm.

Our host had an almost brand-new Chevrolet Carryall that seated 14 people. In it he transported us to several nearby places over the miserable dirt roads, including the main one from distant Ciudad Chihuahua, which was blocked by a gigantic boulder that had crashed down during a storm. One destination, where he left us to our own devices for a few hours, was at the Laguna Arareco, a perfect gem of a lake. It had been formed by a small dam, but was a marvelous facsimile of an Alpine tarn, nestled among rocks and completely unspoiled by mankind. Even the road on which we had traveled was out of sight. There I found nine of the garter snakes I had named *virgatenuis* in 1963, as a new upland race of the wide-ranging Mexican garter snake, *Thamnophis eques*. My new subspecies had a very narrow, light blue middorsal stripe and a venter to match it in color. Small fishes, many of which I saw in a shallow place near shore, were probably its principal food. One snake, however, was swallowing a small frog, a member of the *Rana pipiens* complex.

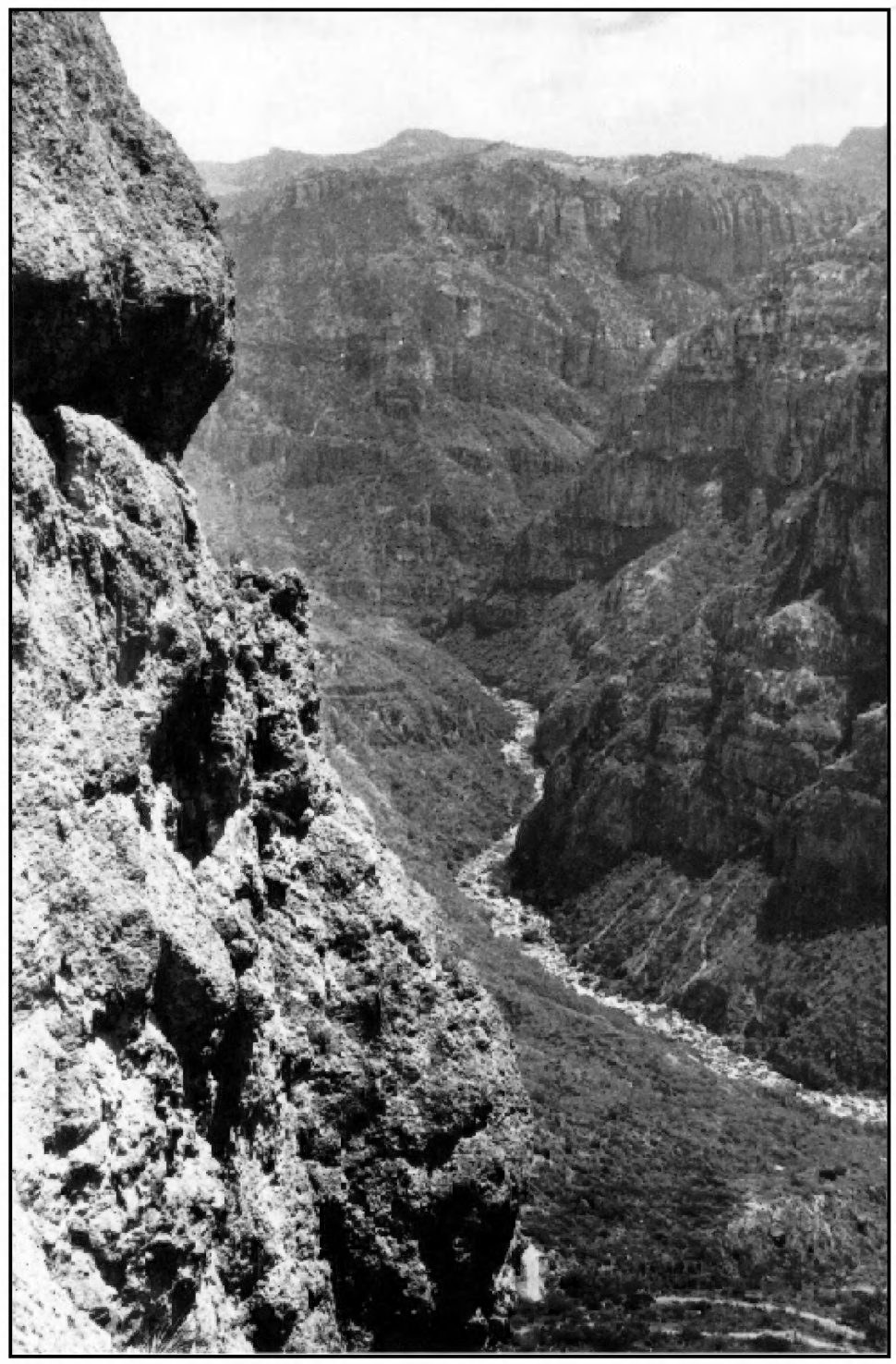
While we were eating the lunch Señora Dominguez had fixed for us, we were surprised to see a *campesino* come along the road. After we exchanged greetings, he pointed to my fishing rod and told us there were no *pescados* (edible fishes) in the lake. Fortunately, I didn't have to explain the use of the pole, because a mountain (Yarrow's) spiny lizard, *Sceloporus jarrovii*, suddenly appeared on a nearby rock, and I was able to demonstrate how I used my noose. That started a lively conversation. He said there were many lizards around, but that snakes were scarce. I showed him my garter snakes, and they astonished him as much as watching me catch a lizard with a fishing rod.

Señor Dominguez suggested an all-day trip to see another great barranca. It was a bit expensive because we were his only fares, but it surely was worth it. We traveled southward in comfort along a sinuous, up-and-down road on a round trip that was 75 miles in each direction. In addition to the money he made, the vehicle was so new that our host was enjoying driving it. He had installed a group of *cornetas* (horns) that played a musical chord, but they were loud enough to be heard by an approaching car or truck. He demonstrated their use repeatedly as we rounded curves and approached blind spots.

The dirt road was only a single lane, but it was fairly well graded because it was used to transport ore to the railroad for shipment. There were occasional pull-offs for passing, but getting by most of the big ore trucks was a matter of squeezing and maneuvering. As we moved steadily southward we met and passed a dozen or more that were almost overflowing with ore and proceeding at a moderate pace. We eventually reached the rim of the Barranca de Batopilas, toward whose head the trucks crawled slowly upward from someplace far below. Our driver told us it was the deepest of the great canyons, and, indeed, when I used my binoculars and braced myself against a rock for steadiness, I could make out no details of the road and the tiny village at the bottom. It was assuredly the most precipitously awesome chasm we ever saw, and Isabelle and I were no strangers to the Grand Canyon. There was a noticeable difference, however. Winds from the Pacific carry moisture eastward into the barrancas, and the brilliant rock colors, so spectacular in Arizona, are muted by sparse vegetation (lichens?) that produces a generally grayish panorama. We had noticed the same phenomenon during our trip by rail through the Barranca del Cobre.

Whereas the full trucks took their time coming up, the drivers, having off-loaded at the railhead, drove back as fast as they could. Although it was still broad daylight, our *cornetas* were used even more frequently than they had been earlier in the day. Once, we rounded a curve and met a truck coming toward us at a fast clip. Only the reflexes of our driver and the one in the truck saved us from a violent head-on collision. They both literally stood up on their brakes, and we came to a bone-jarring stop that threw Isabelle and me out of our seats. Only a few feet separated the two vehicles. The truck driver had obviously been drinking. We decided the best way to describe the daily routine was to say that the drivers came up loaded with ore, and returned loaded with tequila.

During that all-day trip we stopped where a bridge crossed



Barranca of the Río Batopilas, Chihuahua, Mexico, September 13, 1967. Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.

the Río Urique. The gorge through which it passed at that point was not particularly impressive, but it is the Urique that carved much of the Barranca del Cobre farther downstream. Eventually it joins the Río Fuerte, which flows into the Gulf of California.

On our way back to Creel, during the afternoon, we stopped two or three times to look for herps. The Arroyo de Basíhuare, 12 miles by road south of the town, had considerable water flowing through it, and some boys, who were throwing stones into it, told us they had seen snakes. Upstream were many large waterworn rocks, sharply angled above a pool that was about three feet deep. There we saw three more of the blue-striped garter snakes. I caught one as it swam by, well below the surface, and I nearly went in headfirst when I grabbed it.

The next snake, which I caught nearby, produced considerable excitement. It was a narrow-headed garter snake, *Thamnophis rufipunctatus*, and, when I plucked it from the water with my bare hand, there was a chorus of excited yells from Dominguez and the boys: "¡*Cuidado*! ¡*Es muy peligroso*!" (Take care! It is very dangerous!). Those exclamations were followed by, "*Es un pichicuate*" (It is a *pichicuate*). So I had caught a legendary snake, one of a variety of species to which the same colloquial name was given.

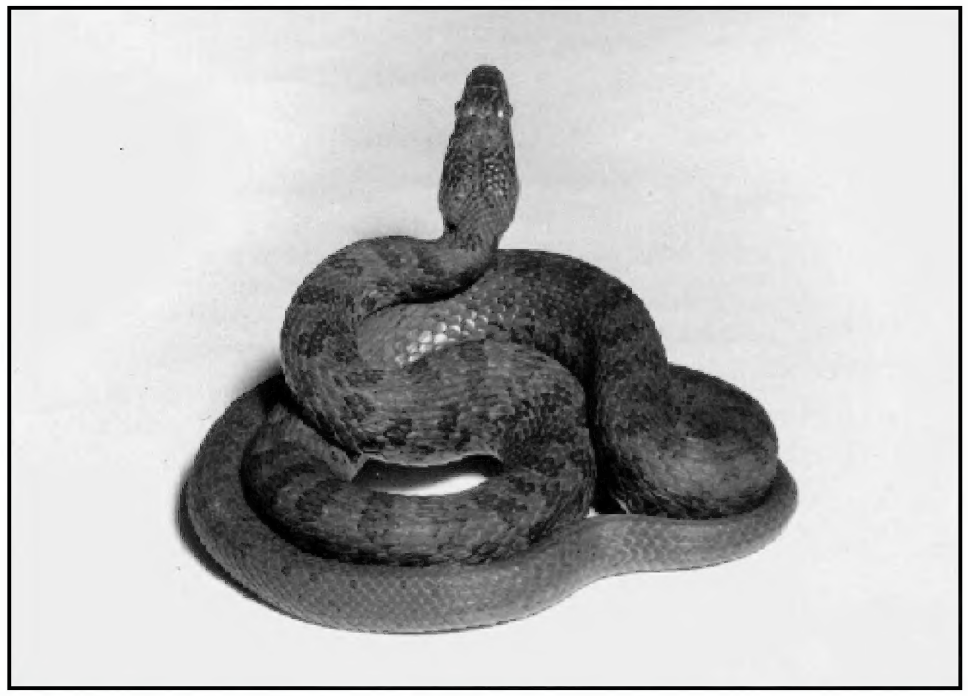
Many years later, while I was working on the Gloyd and Conant monograph on *Agkistrodon* and its allies, the word "*pichicuate*" surfaced again. That time it was used for the formidable *Agkistrodon bilineatus*. I did some research and found that the appellation "*pichicuate*" was loosely given to any usually grayish, triangular-headed, presumed venomous snake. The *pichicuate* was alleged to be more dangerous than the largest rattlesnake. The name obviously derived from folklore rather than from any knowledge of the anatomy of the snakes themselves.

We made a few forays on foot from the Hotel Nuevo. Creel, at the time, was scarcely more than a swelling along the railroad, and it could be inspected easily in 15 minutes. There was a tiny train station, structures for the storage of ores and timber, and equipment for loading them onto railroad cars. A fairly liberal sprinkling of houses, storage sheds, warehouses, and a church completed the meager ensemble. One day I walked along the railroad tracks for more than a mile and made a startling discovery. They were twin ribbons of steel without a single break in them. It was my first experience with welded rails, and I wondered how they worked. When I was a boy, I sometimes would walk along the railroad tracks that passed through Red Bank, New Jersey, where I spent most of my adolescence. They consisted of long steel rails spiked to the wooden crossties, but there was a gap between each rail and the next to allow for expansion in warm weather and contraction in cold. As the trains moved along there was a steady clickety-clack as the wheels rolled over the gaps. But at Creel there was not a break in the long, continuous rails. Since then I have encountered the same type of equipment in Europe and at home.

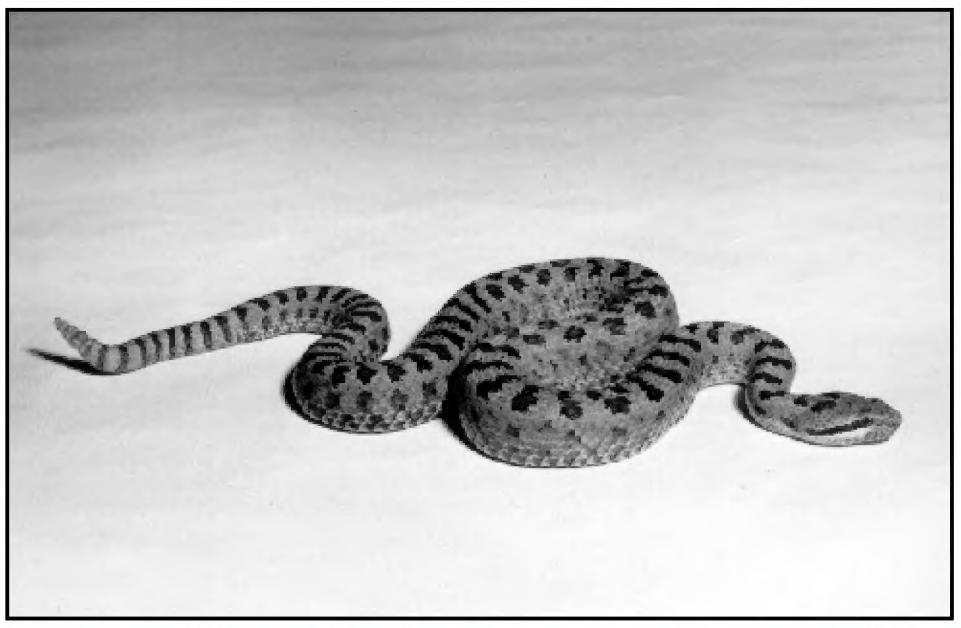
I even found that welded rail runs through Philadelphia's 30th Street Station and onward, in opposite directions, to New York and Washington. Surely the law of contraction and expansion had not been repealed. Over a period of many years, I asked several engineers for an explanation, but I stumped them all.

I finally received the information I wanted indirectly, through *Iron Age*, a magazine devoted partly to railroading. When metallurgic research showed that the special alloys used in modern tracks have a minimum of expansion and contraction, welded rails were tried. They worked well in Europe, where we saw them in Mexico, and in much of the United States, but in very hot regions they sometimes buckled and were responsible for railroad wrecks. Fairly recently the old-style rails were being replaced by the welded type not far from Grants, New Mexico.

Behind the Hotel Nuevo was a 300-foot hill surmounted by a large white statue of Cristo Rey (Christ the King) similar to ones we had seen on elevations countless times near small Mexican settlements. We discovered there was a footpath to



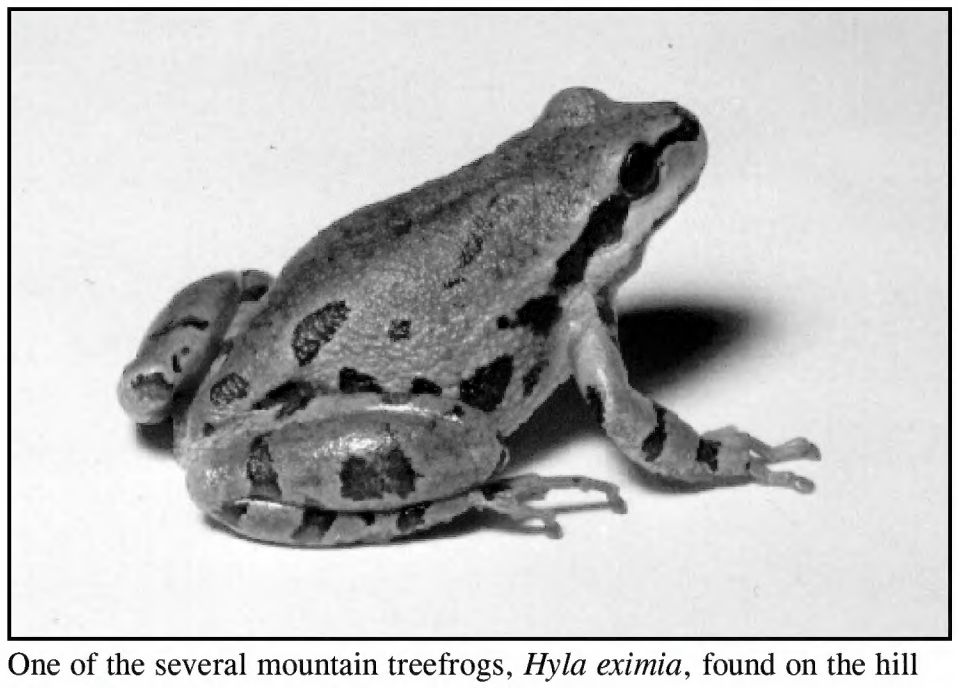
The narrow-headed garter snake, *Thamnophis rufipunctatus*, found in a creek south of Creel, Chihuahua, on September 13, 1967, that caused so much excitement. Our host, Señor Dominguez, and several boys assured us that it was the deadly *pichicuate*, a name applied to a variety of snakes that were grayish and with necks narrower than their heads. Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.



The twin-spotted rattlesnake, *Crotalus pricei pricei*, found on the hill overlooking the small town of Creel, near the Continental Divide in Chihuahua, Mexico, on September 12, 1967. An elderly Tarahumara Indian, in full costume, assured us that it was good to eat. He also told us that the native name for that kind of rattlesnake was *chachámuri*. Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.

the summit, so one afternoon we climbed upward accompanied by 10-year-old Juan Dominguez. Isabelle remained at the base of the statue, taking in the view of the little town and the wilderness beyond it with both her eyes and her camera. Juan and I went exploring. The hilltop was relatively flat and sparsely covered with second-growth pine, but there were several stone piles through which we began to search. Under a flattish rock I found a real prize, a twin-spotted rattlesnake, *Crotalus pricei*, a rather small snake marked with pairs of dark spots along its back. I pinned it down gently with the basal half of my fishing rod and picked it up, holding it in back of its head in the approved fashion with one hand and supporting its weight with my other. Then I suddenly realized that I had no place to put it. My snake bag was thrust through the back of my belt. Despite knowing that I had a *víbora* (venomous snake), Juan not only extracted my bag but also held it open while I dropped in the snake. The same hilltop yielded a garter snake, *Thamnophis cyrtopsis cyrtopsis*; a fairly young mountain skink, *Eumeces callicephalus*; another *Sceloporus jarrovii*; and three treefrogs, *Hyla eximia*, a species that ranges widely through western and southern Mexico and into our own Southwest. I gave Juan five pesos (then worth about 65 cents) as a reward for his help. When we neared the bottom of the hill on the way back, he started running and raced all the way home to spread the news that I had caught a live *víbora*. He dutifully gave his mother the five pesos, but he stirred up so much interest among the Dominguez's friends and neighbors that I had to show off the snake for them. We gathered in a small lounge in the Hotel Nuevo, the spectators at a safe distance from me. I fished out the garter snake with my hook, and then I upended the snake bag and gently "poured" the rattler into my wide-mouthed gallon bottle, and screwed on the lid. The bottle was placed on a table, the crowd was cautioned not to touch it, and soon Señor Dominguez had everyone lined up to have a close-up but brief look at the unusual serpent. In the crowd was a rather elderly Tarahumara, in native costume, who, with gestures, informed us that it was good to eat. He and Dominguez told me that the native name for it was *chachámuri*.

That prize went back with us to the Philadelphia Zoo, and I felt sure it would be a first for the reptile collection. I was wrong. We had exhibited one way back in 1902 that had come from Colonia Garcia, a lot farther north of where I found mine, but still in Chihuahua.



One of the several mountain treefrogs, *Hyla eximia*, found on the hill above Creel. Photograph by Isabelle Hunt Conant.

We were far more intrigued by the Tarahumara than we ever had been by other native tribes. They were a strong, virile people, but most of them were extremely shy. We saw them occasionally in Creel, but the moment Isabelle's camera appeared they vanished. There were a few exceptions: the vendors at the stop before the train began its descent into the barranca, the elderly man who came to see my rattlesnake, and another whom Dominguez knew. For a handful of *dulces* (wrapped candies) and a pack of cigarettes he let Isabelle take his picture, but his family remained well in the background. Twice we saw men resting with one foot raised and held against the knee of the opposite leg, a stance also used by primitive people in other parts of the world. Each man had a load on his back supported in part by a tump-line passing across his forehead.

Dominguez, with whom we spent considerable time on our excursions from Creel, told us a lot about the Tarahumara. The caves in which they lived were mere rock overhangs walled off with stones at the outer edge. In cold weather a blanket covered the gap through which they entered and exited. Their clothing consisted of a white tunic, the equivalent of a loincloth, a band around their heads, and a pair of *huaraches* (sandals) or no footgear at all. I asked how they dressed during the winters, and was told it was the same. I then inquired about the depth of the snow, and our host told us that sometimes there was a meter (slightly more than three feet) on the ground. How incredible! We admired their physiques and stamina.

Recent information indicates that the Tarahumara are now the largest native tribe in Mexico. They have a vast rugged region in which to live, roam, and retain their traditional customs. Dominguez told us that they thought nothing of climbing up and down the nearly sheer walls of the Barranca de Batopilas. Their footraces, during which they kick a wooden ball for long distances for days, are legendary. Incidentally, among my most treasured possessions is one of their balls, which I found in a relatively flat, open area a few miles south of the town.

Our departure from Creel was on September 13 at 8:00 P.M. We slept fairly well in a Pullman car in which I had reserved a compartment, and we were back in Ojinaga at 7:00 the next morning. We hired a taxi to take us to Presidio, but, of course, we had to stop first for U.S. Customs inspection. It was perfunctory, except that I had to show my Mexican collecting permit and list all the livestock I was taking back to the zoo. We soon retrieved our Kamper, ate breakfast at the Oil Flyer, and then drove back to Ojinaga. There we used up our remaining pesos buying gifts for friends and relatives, as well as a bottle of tequila each. When we met the Customs man again on the American side of the Rio Grande bridge, he told us we were in luck. The Texas tax man wasn't there. We were delighted, because we were thoroughly disgusted with the local law that required everyone to pay a tax just to haul alcoholic beverages across Texas. We thought it was a holdup. The tax, during earlier years, was more than we paid for our full bottles in Mexico.

My first chore in Presidio was to visit a service station and have the Volkswagen placed on a lift and inspected for any damage that might have resulted from our near disaster at Closed Canyon. Neither the mechanic nor I could detect anything wrong. We then bought food and ice. During the noon recess from school we found Wayne Baize, who had custody of several live reptiles the Texas A&M field crew had caught for us. Among them were three checkered whiptail lizards of the *Cnemidophorus tesselatus* complex, which were very welcome. We had not yet photographed any member of that group and didn't know where we might get one.

Once we were out of town we changed from our "good" clothes into dungarees and were ready for fieldwork. All we did on our way back to the Big Bend National Park, however, was to guide a fairly large western diamondback, *Crotalus atrox*, into a large clump of cactus well off the highway. We were back at the K-Bar in time for supper.

The trip to Creel and the great barrancas was a truly marvelous experience. We had ridden the train both down and up over the most rugged route we ever traversed, and we had sampled a bit of the herpetofauna of the highlands of southwestern Chihuahua, a dozen species in all. That wonderful journey would remain in our memories as long as we lived. We didn't know it at the time, but it was the last trip we ever made to Mexico together.

Things are different now. Most important, the Mexican government created the Parque Nacional de Barranca del Cobre, embracing 7350 square miles, to preserve the vast canyon complex and its environs, even Batopilas and its precipitous gorge. Tourism blossomed. Auto excursions such as we took, as well as several others, are available, and there are two motels in Creel worthy of listing by the American Automobile Association. Further, the road is now paved all the way from Ciudad Chihuahua to Creel. That town is no longer isolated, and can easily be reached by automobile. The wonderful train trip is still the main attraction, and travel agencies soliciting business strongly stress the marvelous scenery and the spirit of adventure.

According to information I have received from Dennis J. Miller, Executive Director of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, Presidio has come to life and is now one of the fastest-growing towns in Texas. Ojinaga is connected by paved roads not only with Ciudad Chihuahua, but also with Ciudad Camargo to the south. There is no longer passenger service from Ojinaga, so one must board the Chihuahua al Pacifíco in the state's capital city. The implementation of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, bids fair to make both Presidio and Ojinaga important links between the two countries. How very much has changed in almost 30 years!

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A Review of Varanid Research at the Dallas Zoo

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There are currently 46 recognized species of monitor lizards (Bennett, 1995). Over the past 31 years the Dallas Zoo has maintained 23 different species of varanids. Maintaining such a diverse collection has presented many opportunities for staff members to investigate aspects of the monitor lizards' biology. In the following paper I will summarize some of the past and present research contributions made by staff of the Dallas Zoo.

Reproductive Biology

Male–male ritualized combat behavior of the pygmy mulga monitor, *Varanus gilleni*, was first described by Murphy and Mitchell (1974). Male combatants would begin by assuming a bipedal stance and locking both fore and hindlimbs. Further investigation of such behavior (Carpenter et al., 1976) described this process in detail. The bipedal embrace was followed by a series of twisting movements which resulted in an arch formed by the two lizards bodies, supported by their tails and snouts. This process was repeated until the dominance of one lizard was established.

Doles and Card (1995) described a case of delayed fertilization in Gould's monitor, *V. gouldii*. A female deposited a clutch of ten eggs 21 days after male contact was terminated. These eggs eventually desiccated and fertility was undetermined. Sixty-five days later a second clutch of 8 eggs was found; four were fertile. Double clutching of *V. gouldii* and Gray's monitor, *V. olivaceus*, was also reported (Card, 1994).

Female black tree monitor, *V. beccarii*, pre-ovipositional aggression toward cage mates and keepers has been documented (Garrett and Peterson, 1991). Although not a factor of varanid reproductive biology, cage mate aggression has also been described in Mertens' water monitor, *V. mertensi* (Murphy and Lamoreaux, 1978). This process involved a single male specimen's threat displays, such as assuming a bipedal stance, bipedal flight, and abrupt jerking movements, directed toward other large lizards.

Chemical Ecology

The use of chemosensory discrimination of prey by *V. gouldii* was examined by Garrett and Card (1993). In this study two experiments were conducted. In the first experiment, ingestively naive neonate *V. gouldii* were offered chemical cues on cotton applicators, from three prey items and two controls. The resulting tongue-flick attack score (TFAS) was recorded. Cricket (*Acheta domestica*) prey cues resulted in the highest score. The second experiment examined any differences in TFAS obtained by odor cues taken from the exoskeleton and internal fluids of crickets. No significant differences were reported.

Following these results, the chemosensory behavior of *V. gouldii* was compared to that of the Gila monster, *Heloderma suspectum* (Garrett et al., 1995). In a series of experiments, postingestion elevation in tongue-flicks rate (PETF) occurred in *V. gouldii* but not in *H. suspectum*. Both *V. gouldii* and *H. suspectum* were able to follow prey-chemical trails with equal success.

Feeding Behavior

Currently staff of the Dallas Zoo have been investigating aspects of the feeding behavior of the green tree monitor, *V. prasinus*, and *V. beccarii*. Multiple experiments (Hartdegen et al., In press) have been conducted to determine what effects prey type, size, and activity have on feeding behavior and prey handling technique.

One paper concerning the systematics of varanids has also been produced (Card and Kluge, 1995). This paper describes the systematic relationships between varanids as well as the use of hemipeneal skeleton in sexual determination of some monitor species.

Today the Dallas Zoo maintains groups of five varanid species in an effort to continually examine the ecology and biology of monitor lizards.

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Bull. Chicago Herp. Soc. 32(9):198-201, 1997

A Herpetological Collection from Northern Chihuahua, Mexico

Julio A. Lemos-Espinal[1], Hobart M. Smith[2], Royce E. Ballinger[3], Geoffrey R. Smith[4] and David Chiszar[5]

Abstract

Eighteen species of amphibians and reptiles are reported from various localities in northern Chihuahua, mostly in the vicinity of the Cabeza de Vaca Basin sand dunes. Included is the first record for Mexico of *Cnemidophorus inornatus llanuras*, the northeasternmost record for the state of *Hypsiglena torquata texana*, and a range extension for *Urosaurus ornatus caeruleus*. Numerous records for the unique sand dune/plains ecotone are of special zoogeographic and taxonomic interest.

During brief excursions totaling 12 days in the summers of 1995 and 1996, one of us (JAL-E) visited northern Chihuahua with the explicit objective of determining the geographic and taxonomic relationships of *Sceloporus undulatus speari* and *S. u. belli*. These two taxa were known to exist within a few dozen kilometers of each other without evidence of intergradation, but whether their ranges actually met, and if so whether intergradation occurs, was unknown.

That objective was achieved, as reported elsewhere (Lemos-Espinal et al., 1997b), and the question of seasonal color change in *S. u. speari* was also resolved (Lemos-Espinal et al., 1997a).

However, other reptiles and amphibians were collected incidentally as the opportunity arose. A total of 130 specimens representing 20 species and subspecies was secured. Excluding *S. belli* (as now ranked) and *S. u. speari*, reported elsewhere, we here summarize the remaining 81 specimens of 18 taxa. The only reptiles seen but not collected, through lack of space, were *Terrapene ornata luteola*, of which numerous individuals were observed on Rancho Luz Alva and Rancho El Setenta. Two others not here reported were taken at the base of Cerros Colorados.

Most localities of collection are indicated on standard maps, or on the map in Smith et al. (1995). Exceptions include Cerros Colorados, ~22 airline km SE of Samalayuca. This is a group of small, rocky hills, the largest reaching ~300 m above the surrounding sandy plains, close to the edge of the vast sand dune area to the north. Sierra El Kilo is a small, rocky hill near El Kilo, ~36 km S Samalayuca on Hwy 45. El Setenta is near the southern edge of the dunes area, ~17 km S of Salamalayuca on Hwy 45. The part of Sierra El Presidio that was sampled is ~10 km directly east of Cerros Colorados.

All specimens are in the University of Colorado Museum (UCM) except for seven of four species, which, although cataloged in UCM, have been returned to Mexico in conformance with requirements of the permits issued for these studies.

Bufo cognatus Say

One specimen (UCM 58465) was found in sand dunes near Samalayuca, on property of the thermoelectric company, at 2006 h. The species is known from numerous localities in the state (cf. Tanner, 1989).

Cnemidophorus exsanguis Lowe

Six specimens (UCM 58520–5) were taken in rocky areas at the halfway level on Cerros Colorados, 3 July 1996. Five are brightly spotted and striped on a very dark ground color, subadults 58–62 mm snout–vent length (SVL), whereas one is an adult 83 mm SVL, with relatively faded light stripes and spots on a brownish background. The species apparently does not occur on the dunes, which only *C. inornatus* appears to inhabit. The ranges of *C. exsanguis* and *C. tigris* appear to surround the dunes.

Cnemidophorus inornatus heptagrammus Axtell

A single specimen (UCM 58466) was taken at Rancho El Jonuco, 11 July 1995. This locality lies well within the Cabeza de Vaca Basin sand dunes. Presumably this subspecies ranges throughout these dunes, but is replaced west of them on the open plains by *C. i. llanuras*, and probably south of them by *C. i. chihuahuae*. The diagnostic median stripe is complete and prominent in this individual, sharply contrasted with the short, faint stripe in the specimens here referred to *C. i. llanuras*.

Cnemidophorus inornatus llanuras Wright and Lowe

Three specimens (UCM 58574–6) were taken at the edge of a dry stream 1 km N Ascención, 6 July 1996. They agree in details of pattern, color and scalation with the original description of this subspecies (Wright and Lowe, 1993), having 6.25–6.9 median stripes, very poorly defined, and 67–70 granules around body. They conform with the one (now UMC 36190) reported by Lemos-Espinal et al. (1994) as *C. i. chihuahuae* from 15 km NEE El Sancho, on the western edge of the Cabeza de Vaca Basin sand dunes. They are sharply different from two of the nearest subspecies, *C. i. arizonae* and *C. i. heptagrammus*, both having a well-developed seventh (median) light stripe, but differ less sharply from *C. i. chihuahuae*, which may prove to be indistinguishable. The two samples

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here cited occupy habitats geographically closer and topographically more like that of *C. i. llanuras* than that of *C. i. chihuahuae*.

This is the first report of *C. i. llanuras* for Mexico. Further samples will be required to clarify its relationship with *C. i. chihuahuae*. Neither subspecies apparently occurs on the Cabeza de Vaca Basin sand dunes, where *C. i. heptagrammus* is reported.

Cnemidophorus tigris marmoratus Baird and Girard

Two adult specimens were collected: one (UCM 58486) at the base of Cerros Colorados, 11 July 1995, and one (UCM 1604) from El Setenta, 7 July 1996. See comments in Lemos-Espinal (1994: 162-164).

Cophosaurus texanus scitulus (Peters)

Two specimens (UCM 58530–1) were taken 11 July and 9 August 1995, and six (UCM 58526–9, 58588–9) 3–4 July 1996, on Cerros Colorados. All were in rocky areas near the base and middle of the hills. Apparently the species does not occur on the dunes, where it would compete with *Holbrookia maculata*. In the absence of suitable rocky habitat, *Cophosaurus* is unlikely to occur any closer to the Cabeza de Vaca Basin sand dunes than it is here recorded.

All specimens are mature, including four males 69–75 mm SVL, and four females 54–64 mm SVL. No young were observed.

Although this locality is well within the known range of the subspecies (Peters, 1951), the eight specimens conform with expectation in only one of its three diagnostic characters: the number of dorsal scales in a headlength (27–42, only one over 39). The femoral pore totals (24–31 in this series, only three over 27) fail to conform with the expected 82% with 28 or more, and the ventral count likewise does not conform with the expected 84% with 80 or more (72–90 in this series, only 50% 80 or more).

Crotaphytus collaris (Say)

A juvenile (UCM 58467, 46 mm SVL) was taken 9 August 1995, on Sierra El Presidio (quite late, at 1840 h), and a large male (UCM 58468, 99 mm SVL) 4 July 1996, in a rock crevice near the base of Cerros Colorados. The species probably is absent throughout the Cabeza de Vaca Basin except on isolated outcrops like Cerros Colorados.

It is probable that valid subspecies exist in this species; certainly the populations on the two sides of the Continental Divide in Colorado are markedly distinct from each other, and the recently described *C. c. melanomaculatus* Axtell and Webb (1995) of northern central Mexico is not to be dismissed casually. However, McGuire (1996) recognized no subspecies in his review of the genus. Ingram and Tanner's (1971) review would place the present specimens with *C. c. fuscus*, first described in that review.

Phrynosoma cornutum (Harlan)

A single large female (UCM 58464, 103 mm SVL, returned to Mexico) was taken in sand dunes 500 m N Rancho Luz Alva, 9 airline miles WSWW Samalayuca, 9 July 1995. The species is well known in the area (cf. Tanner, 1978).

Phrynosoma modestum Girard

Three specimens (UCM 58483–5) were taken on the sandy plain near the base of Cerros Colorados on 9 August 1995, and 3–4 July 1996. The species is well known from that general area (e.g., Tanner, 1987).

Sceloporus p. poinsetti Baird and Girard

Twenty-four specimens were obtained. Twenty-two of them are from Cerros Colorados (UCM 58563–7, 58570–85; 58579 returned to Mexico), and two from Sierra El Presidio (UCM 58568–9, 58590). They conform with the nominotypical subspecies, all having a dorsal scale count of 31 or more (excluding them from *S. p. macrolepis*, with 26–29 dorsal scales), and all but one (with 37) having a dorsal scale count of 35 or fewer (excluding them from *S. p. polylepis*, with 36–41 dorsal scales; Smith and Chrapliwy, 1958).

All of the adults have a SVL of 85–112 mm (112 mm in a male, 110 mm in a female). A hatchling of 32 mm SVL was taken 3 July. A half-grown specimen, 64 mm SVL, was taken on the same date; presumably it represents the preceding year's brood. On 9 August immatures at 63 mm and 69 mm SVL were collected, also presumably of the preceding year's brood. Apparently sexual maturity is reached the third year.

Although these specimens do not extend the known range limits of the subspecies, probably it occurs no closer to the extensive sand dunes radiating from Samalayuca than Cerros Colorados. A large hiatus in the range of the species undoubtedly coincides with the Cabeza de Vaca Basin in which the dunes lie (cf. Axtell, 1978). On Cerros Colorados all were found basking on rock exposures, from near the base of the hills to the very top. On Sierra El Presidio, the specimens were taken quite late, at 1840 h.

Urosaurus ornatus caeruleus (Smith)

A single specimen (UCM 58471, returned to Mexico) is from Sierra El Nido, 36 km from Samalayuca, taken 12 July 1995. It is an adult male with the characteristic sky-blue venter and throat, and a dark-reticulated dorsum.

Tanner (1987) records the subspecies from numerous localities in northwestern and northern central Chihuahua, but the present specimen extends its known range some 135 airline km N of the previously northernmost record in the central part of the state at 18.5 mi E Flores Magón.

Uta stansburiana stejnegeri Schmidt

Twenty-five specimens are in the collection. Six (UCM 58489–92, 58495–6; 58591 and 58496 returned to Mexico) are from the sand dunes near Rancho Luz Alva, 9 km WSWW Samalayuca, 9 July 1995; two (UCM 58493–4) from the rest stop 11.2 km S Samalayuca, at km 307.6 on Hwy 45, 9 July 1995; two (UCM 58497–8) from Nuevo Rancho Alegre, 11 July 1995; eight (UCM 58499–58506; 58504 returned to Mexico) from the dunes at the base of Cerros Colorados, 9 August 1995; two (UCM 58507, 58591, the latter returned to Mexico) 4 July 1996 and one (UCM 58592) 2 July 1996 from the latter locality; and one (UCM 58508) from El Setenta, 7 July 1996.

The largest female measures 51 mm SVL, the largest male 54 mm. All females appear to be mature, the smallest measuring 44 mm SVL, except for one (UCM 58505), taken 9 August, measuring 32 mm SVL and therefore probably representing that year's brood. Similarly, all males appear to be mature, the smallest measuring 48 mm SVL, except for one (UCM 58492) taken 9 July, measuring 24.5 mm SVL, presumably having hatched only a few days earlier.

This species appears to be the most common lizard of the Cabeza de Vaca Basin, although it apparently is absent in the western part of the state (Tanner, 1987). Field guide range maps need revision of the depicted range in Chihuahua, as noted by Lemos-Espinal et al. (1994).

Crotalus atrox Baird and Girard

One adult male (UCM 58586) was found under a large boulder 11 July 1995, at 1210 h, on Cerros Colorados. Numerous records exist for the species throughout northern and central Chihuahua (cf. Gloyd, 1940; Tanner, 1985).

Crotalus m. molossus Baird and Girard

Two large males (UCM 58509–10) were taken in the shade of huge boulders on Cerro Colorados—one on 11 July, the other on 10 August 1995. These are from the easternmost locality known for the species in northern Chihuahua; most other records are for the western and southern mountains (e.g., Gloyd, 1940, and Tanner, 1985).

Crotalus viridis viridis (Rafinesque)

One juvenile (UCM 58472) was taken on the sand dunes of Rancho Luz Alva, 12 July 1995. It was found at the base of a bush at 1747 h. This record is the eighth for Mexico, and supplements two others for the same area (Lemos-Espinal et al., 1994). The southern limit for the species in northern central Chihuahua probably coincides with the southern limit of the Cabeza de Vaca Basin sand dunes.

Hypsiglena torquata texana Stejneger

One adult male (UCM 58470, 330 mm TTL, 59 mm TL) was taken 4 July 1996, under a yucca pulled from the sand at the base of Cerro Colorados. We follow Tanner (1985) in resurrecting this subspecies, which he there separated from *H. t. ochrorhyncha* Cope, returning to the distinction proposed in his 1946 review of the genus.

The specimen has 165 ventrals (Dowling count), 51+1 caudals, 57 blotches on body (separated from each other by about a half scale length), 21 midbody scale rows, 8-8 supralabials, and 1-1 loreals. There is no nuchal light ring, and the nuchal blotch is tripartite, the median part of nearly uniform width (although sinuous posteriorly) and reaching the parietals. It appears to conform with the criteria for *H. t. texana* as of Tanner (1946), although no further clarification of its diagnostic characteristics was given with its revival.

Although Tanner (1985) lists 12 specimens from Chihuahua, all are from western or south-central parts of the state. Other records are from Cd. Chihuahua (Cope, 1886, the earliest for the state), 4 mi N and 2 mi W Cd. Chihuahua (Chrapliwy and Fugler, 1955), and 3.9 mi N Galeana (Williams et al., 1961). There are no previous records for the northeastern part of the state.

Pituophis catenifer affinis Hallowell

An adult female (UCM 58587) was taken 11 August 1995, on sand dunes at the edge of Samalayuca, near the thermoelectric company grounds. The subspecies occurs throughout most of the state. Data on the present specimen conforms with expectation (cf. Lemos-Espinal et al., 1994): ventrals 225, caudals 55, midbody scale rows 31, preoculars 1-1, postoculars 3-3, body blotches 50, tail blotches 12.

Sonora semiannulata Baird and Girard

One adult female (UCM 58469, 323 mm TTL, 65 mm TL) was found on the base of a bush on Sierra El Presidio 9 August 1995. It has 34 dark saddles on body, separated by spaces equal in length to the saddles, and 10 on the tail. Scale rows are 15-15-14; ventrals 164; caudals 46.

This locality lies well within the known range of this confusingly variable species, in which no subspecies have yet been shown to be valid (cf. Frost and Van Devender, 1979; and Frost, 1983).

Acknowledgments

We are much indebted to Dr. Shi Kuei-Wu and Rosanne Humphrey for providing museum care for the specimens here reported, and for the use of comparative material; to Drs. Carl Bock and Michael Grant for space and facilities for study of the collection; and to the Instituto Nacional de Ecología (SEMARNAP) for scientific collecting permit no. A00702-05929, and for exportation permit no. 00473.

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HerPET-POURRI

by Ellin Beltz

It was great to see you, too

For those who weren't at the August meeting, y'all missed a great talk by Roger Repp from Arizona. Great slides, cool animals, excellent presentation of two slide carrousels full of rattlesnakes, lyre snakes, Gila monsters and other denizens of the various habitats found around Tucson and in the great state of Arizona (even near Feenix). I also enjoyed reading the nametags of all the new board members, many of whom I'd never seen before. Do you get the idea that I haven't been at a meeting in a while? I sure did. Anyway, not only haven't I been at meetings, but the number of animals I keep is at an all time low—down to just a few toads and a bird. So I have a lot of empty tanks, home-made lids, heat lamps/pads, thermometers, pumps, filters, flat rocks, water bowls and all the other impedimenta of a largish herp collection. I also have many, many natural history books (quite a few on herps), a large collection of framed and unframed posters, photos and prints, event tee-shirts (in all sizes), costume jewelry with a herp motif, and souvenirs from herp meetings including the World Congress of Herpetology in Canterbury. On Saturday, November 15, from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., I'm going to have a "Great Herpetological Re-sale Sale," and you are all invited. You may also take (for free!) clippings used to write this column for the last 11 years. Get all your Herp Holiday shopping out of the way. As always, my address is 1647 N. Clybourn Avenue. There's lots of free street parking and I'm 1/2 block from the Red Line North/Clybourn station. Hope to see you then!

No newts ain't good news

California Newts (*Taricha torosa*) in the Santa Monica Mountains are in decline and researchers suspect that introduced mosquito fish and wildfires that have reduced shading along streams may be at fault. Mosquito fish have been documented eating newt larvae according to Lee Kats, a herpetologist at Pepperdine University. [*Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 1997, from Norman Scott, Jr.]

Frog news

• Deformed frog observations are being collected at <http://www.npsc.nbs.gov/narcam> and at a toll free number, (800) 238-9801, by the National Biological Service. Citizens are asked not to collect living deformed amphibians; herpetologists will be sent out to sample the sites. However, dead deformed amphibians should be preserved. Take them to your local university herpetology department or museum curator. Freezing destroys tissue and should be avoided unless no other preservation method is available. [*Orlando Sentinel*, June 29, 1997, from Bill Burnett; and *Science News*, July 12, 1997, from Karen Furnweger]

• Five Madagascar tomato frogs have successfully bred at the Baltimore Zoo, producing about 4,000 tadpoles, some of which have transformed into froglets. Several factors were considered key to the successful reproduction. Keepers lowered the depth of the water, reduced humidity levels and dropped temperatures from 75 to 70°F, thus duplicating conditions found in the frogs' habitat during breeding season. The curator of amphibians said, "They just responded beautifully." While tomato frogs have been bred in captivity before, all previously recorded attempts included the use of hormones to jump-start the reproductive cycle. [*Baltimore Sun*, August 12, 1997, from Mark Witwer]

• *Nature Conservancy* Magazine had an excellent article about the Ramsey Canyon leopard frog, which, as its scientific name (*Rana subaquavocalis*) implies, calls from under water in only a few pools in the Huachuca Mountains. The article continues with a discussion of the declining amphibian problem, citing the Wyoming toad and the Costa Rican golden toads and harlequin frogs. The Ramsey Canyon frogs are believed to number several hundred adults and Conservancy stewards are doing all they can in an effort to preserve the species. [September–October 1997, 47(4), from Mark Witwer] The same issue has a fascinating piece on the number of extinctions of flora and fauna by state. Washington State has zero, but Alabama has a whopping 98 species extinct. One assumes the author is only referring to the conterminous United States when he writes, "Alabama is the nation's fourth-richest kingdom of plant and animal species; in species per square mile, only Florida can match it. Its waterways hold half of all species of turtles found in North America. . . . Only two years ago, a near-barren patch of rock . . . presented eight undescribed species of flowering plants. . . . Among [Alabama's] remaining 3,800 species of plants and animals, more than one of every four are considered in danger of extinction."

The shape of things to come

A man in Gilbert, Arizona, was writing programs for business applications and had started a hobby business of raising ostriches when somebody gave him his first tortoise. Now he has 75 tortoises, including several he was given by Federal agencies after confiscations. He says his Aldabras are more docile than the Galapagos tortoises even though their general size and shape is similar. The Feds even gave him some star tortoises which had been "stuck in a shoe box and shoved under a desk without food or water." Most died, but he did keep one from that batch. The man applies his computer knowledge to herp care. The cages are monitored for temperature and humidity, while other computers change heat lamps, fans, misters and heating pads to keep the various reptiles in optimum condition. [*The Arizona Republic*, August 23, 1997, from Tom Taylor]

The party's over

People who carelessly bought baby iguanas for pets, perhaps inspired by a dinosaur movie, are now ditching the animals in record numbers. In 1995, 840,000 iguanas were imported from Central America and Mexico into the U.S.; now animal agencies and herp societies are getting dozens to hundreds of calls from people trying to abandon their pets. As we all know, iguanas are vegetarian and can be quite a handful to

feed and house after they get bigger than the adorable baby phase. Some people are irresponsibly abandoning their pets outdoors. A Humane Society volunteer said, "Too many [people] strive to get the most exotic pet out there—their own little dinosaur. . . . Once you find out it may not be your pet of choice, it's the animal who suffers." The Arizona Herpetological Association has been inundated with secondhand iguanas, sometimes having as many as 30 on hand. [*The Arizona Republic*, July 12, 1997, from Tom Taylor] Personally, I'll never forget the (former) CHS Animal Adoption Chair who said that if we didn't find homes for the two dozen iguanas we had at that time, that we were going to have "one hell of a barbecue."

Caiman abandoned to CHS member

A Chicagoan who wished to remain anonymous because owning caimans is illegal in the city, turned over a 4-foot caiman to Larry Reed, a Porter, Indiana, veterinarian and frequent contributor to this column (*The Caymanian Compass*). Reed said, "It's the nicest caiman I've ever had my hands on. It wasn't aggressive at all. Apparently whoever owned it before handled it a lot. It's in good shape, very good shape." Reed said he would try to place it with one of the dozen or so local people who keep reptiles. [*Porter County Times* and *Chesterton Tribune*, both July 16, 1997, from Jack Schoenfelder]

Range extension

Brahminy blind snakes from Southeast Asia have been found in Hawaii, Florida, Louisiana and as far north as Boston. But, fear not, for these snakes grow only about 6 inches long and look like a rather shiny American brown snake. They eat ants and termites and live in loose soil. The females are parthenogenetic which means you only need one to make many, many more. In New Orleans, they are found around the Audubon Zoo, mostly around the tropical rain forest exhibit. It is possible that they are moved by landscapers and in landscaping materials. One Louisiana herpetologist said, "They are probably all over the place." [*The Lakefront Picayune*, New Orleans, June 5, 1997, from Ernie Liner]

Arribada, 1997

About 35,000 olive ridley sea turtles hit Mexican beaches in June this year; most arrived in only three nights. The large numbers are cited as a result of aggressive anti-poaching operations, development of sustainable turtle use by local people and the navy patrolling the coast. There has been a tenfold increase in the number of nesting turtles from 1988 to 1997, according to Mexican officials. [June 27, 1997: *Little Rock Democrat Gazette* from Bill Burnett; and *New Orleans Times-Picayune* from Ernie Liner]

Arrivaderci, 1997

About 100 baby Kemp's ridley turtles were released on Padre Island National Seashore while park visitors watched. Rangers wearing latex gloves released the day-old hatchlings in an effort to "imprint" them on the sands of the island. Two females have been observed nesting on the island; it is believed they came because they were part of a previous release effort. [*The Courier*, Houma, LA, July 30, 1997, from Ernie Liner]

Laws, rules and regulations

- The San Diego Zoo is covered with signs which read "Please do not annoy, torment, pester, plague, molest, worry, badger, harry, harass, heckle, persecute, irk, bullyrag, vex, disquiet, grate, beset, bother, tease, nettle, tantalize, or ruffle the animals." [Souvenir sign from Eloise Beltz-Decker]

- "Reptiles don't have a lot of jury appeal. It's getting better, but people used to say, `So what? It's just a Gila monster'" said a special agent for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service commenting on the difficulty of prosecuting reptile neglect or abuse cases. [*Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1997, from Ray Boldt and Claus Sutor]

- "According to the Code of Federal Regulations for Parks, Forests, and Public Property, the `feeding, touching, teasing, frightening, or intentionally disturbing of wildlife nesting, breeding or other activities' is prohibited under CFR 36, wildlife protection, section 2.2 (a) (2). On federal lands, the use of a snake stick to move a snake into position for photographing is therefore unlawful." [*National Parks Magazine*, Volume 71 (7-8) July/August 1997, from Mark Witwer]

- The latest round in an apparently neverending saga of the attempted prosecutions of CHS member Tony Janowski for possession of 1,174 turtles and 96 nonvenomous snakes in a van stopped in August 1994 on Interstate 55 in downstate Illinois, has just been filed by State's Attorney Bill Workman. The state had initially charged him with three misdemeanors and a felony charge of transporting protected aquatic life for commercial purposes. The charges were dismissed by a judge twice, first in January 1995 for vague wording in the charges and the second time in May of the same year. Now, the State's Attorney feels that the second ruling should be overturned because it establishes a bad precedent (that the statute of limitations can run out while a case is waiting appeal). [*The Courier*, Logan County, IL, from Steve Coogan]

- A family faces a $250 fine and 30 days in jail if they are charged with an Ohio misdemeanor for transporting wildlife across state lines. The curious story starts with a rental house in Florida where a 76-year old lady had lived for 18 years. The whole time she was there, she fed the wild gopher tortoise that lived in the backyard. Then she moved and the family sold the house, but found out the new owners had dogs. So they took the tortoise with them when they moved to Ohio. Unfortunately for them, gopher tortoises are protected and it is illegal to take them out of Florida, so now they're in trouble. [*Orlando Sentinel*, July 18, 1997, from Bill Burnett]

Rattlesnakes bite three

Three Canadians were bitten recently on the Thirty Thousand Islands of Georgian Bay, Ontario. The Parry Sound hospital treated all three, the last arrived in critical condition and would have died without the 30 vials of antivenin with which he was treated. After recovery, he said "I went to pick up a rock [in the campground] . . . and felt a really deep bite in my hand." [*Toronto Sun*, August 5, 1997] Contributor Brian Bankowski wrote, "It's funny that the only people that seem to meet up with snakes are the ones that don't want to!!"

Dog food

• A 7-foot boa constrictor got onto an enclosed Los Angeles patio and ate a 74-year old woman's pet Chihuahua while she watched, helpless to intervene. The woman has vowed to fight for laws that would keep wild animals out of the city except in zoos. [*Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1997, from Scott Keator, Ray Boldt and Claus Sutor]

• A Florida couple looked on in dismay when an alligator grabbed their 4½-year-old chocolate Labrador, which had been playing in less than a foot of water in a lake near Tallahassee. Although most of these stories end with the dog being eaten, in this case, the dog bit the alligator on the nose, the gator let go and the dog was taken for veterinary treatment. A licensed trapper later killed the gator while warning residents that children and dogs should be kept away from the waterhole. [*Fort Myers News-Press*, August 15, 1997, from Ardis Allen]

Lost and found

• An 8-foot-long boa constrictor escaped its home in Lakemoor, a town in McHenry County, Illinois. The 26-year-old owner contacted police to report the animal missing, but later found it a block away from his home. The county prohibits private possession of snakes longer than 6 feet, so the Animal Control Unit is investigating to see if the man had violated any other animal ordinances. [*Chicago Tribune*, July 26, 1997, from Claus Sutor]

• A woman in Pompano Beach, Florida, awoke when a 5½-foot boa cuddled up next to her in bed. She said, "I jumped out of the bed and saw the outline of something in the dark. I turned on the light in the bathroom. And there it was. Its head was on my pillow." The 3½-year-old rainbow boa had disappeared from a neighbor's bathtub six weeks earlier. [*Orlando Sentinel*, July 12, 1997, from Bill Burnett]

Drugs, snakes and guns—again

Police in Springdale, Arkansas, arrested a 34-year-old man and a 31-year-old woman on felony drug warrants and found several pounds of brick marijuana, a few ounces of powder methamphetamine, nine large snakes, and 20 guns including some equipped with silencers and night-vision devices in their house and thousands of dollars in cash and drug paraphernalia in their car. "A lot of the snakes were intermingled with the drugs to discourage anyone from coming near them," said the local sheriff. [*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, May 21, 1997, from Bill Burnett]

Reptile thefts

• A 3-foot anaconda was stolen from a Portage, Indiana, pet shop. The shop owner said the animal was very aggressive and suggested that the person who took it must have been experienced with snakes. The snake was priced at $250. [*Vidette Times*, July 30, 1997, from Jack Schoenfelder]

• Sixteen Corn Island boa constrictors were stolen from a back porch in Sebastian, Florida, and eight were recovered from a Melbourne pet store. The man who was keeping the snake for a friend who imports them from Nicaragua said, "I was shocked. I couldn't believe someone could manage to come in and just simply walk away with all the snakes." The snakes are valued at $400–500 apiece. [Leesburg FL *Daily Commercial*, July 9, 1997, from Bill Burnett]

Teal appeal

The Shedd Aquarium needs your financial support to continue to breed and care for the critically endangered teal iguanas being maintained by the institution. Send donations to: T.I.F. - John G. Shedd Aquarium, Development Department, 1200 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60605. Also, if you've not yet visited the new gift shop in the Aquarium (which you don't have to pay to get into), it is a don't-miss stop for all herp lovers. They have frog stuff and iguana stuff and even some snake stuff and the shop is modeled on the new fantasy architecture style popularized by WB and Disney. They have a six-foot sculpture of a red-eyed treefrog. Take your camera! If you have more time, the "Frogs!" exhibit is still up and hopping strong. I saw it again recently and enjoyed it just as much as the first time. [*Chicago Sun Times*, March 12, 1997, from Ray Boldt for the fund appeal address]

Turtle strandings

The Brigantine, New Jersey, Marine Mammal Stranding Center published the strandings list for 1996. Last year they found/received 58 turtles, of which only one could be released. They found 50 loggerheads, five leatherbacks and three Kemp's ridleys; one loggerhead was released. [*The Blowhole*, Spring 1997, from Bob Schoelkopf and Sheila Dean] You can contact the MMSC by writing P.O. Box 773, Brigantine, NJ 08203 or calling (609) 266-0538. If you are ever in Atlantic City for a convention or a trip, Brigantine is the next island over the bridge and the Center is well worth a visit.

Thanks to everyone who contributed this month. You can contribute, too. Send actual pages of newspapers or magazines or clippings with the date/publication slug attached (tape please!) to: Ellin Beltz, 1647 N. Clybourn Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614-5507. E-mail letters only <ebeltz@ripco.com> Please note new E-mail address.

Advertisements

American Federation of Herpetoculturists: A nonprofit national membership organization of herpetoculturists, veterinarians, academicians and zoo personnel involved in the captive husbandry and propagation of amphibians and reptiles. Membership includes highly acclaimed magazine, *The Vivarium*, dedicated to dissemination of information on herpetocultural accomplishments, herp medicine, breeding and maintenance, field studies and adventures, enclosure design and much more. AFH membership is $26. Send information requests to: AFH-News, P.O. Box 300067, Escondido CA 92030-0067.

For sale: rats and mice—pinkies, fuzzies and adults. Quantity discounts. Please send a SASE for pricelist or call Bill Brant, *THE GOURMET RODENT*, 6115 SW 137th Avenue, Archer FL 32618, (352) 495-9024, E-mail <GrmtRodent@aol.com>.

For sale: murine-pathogen-free rats and mice available in all sizes, live or frozen: pinkies, fuzzies, crawlers, small, medium and large. Frozen crawler mice in lots of 2000, $.17 each. Also available, full grown hairless mice. FOB shipping point. Master Card accepted. Call (518) 537-2000 between 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. or write SAS Corporation, 273 Hover Avenue, Germantown NY 12526 for prices and additional information.

For sale: high quality feeder mice. Shipped UPS Next Day Air. All mice are properly processed to insure a quality product. Fourth year of production and supply of frozen feeder mice. Prices: pinks, $25/100; fuzzies, $30/100; weanlings, $35/100. Also available are 4 oz.+ rats, $100/100. Quantity discounts available. The Mouse Factory, P.O. Box 85, Alpine TX 79831, (915) 837-7100, Ray Queen.

For sale: from Bayou Rodents, excellent quality feeder mice and rats. Every size available. Pinks starting at $20/100. Orders are shipped by overnight service Monday thru Thursday. We accept Visa, MasterCard and Discover. For more info, contact Rhonda or Peggy, (800) 722-6102.

For sale: **high quality frozen feeders**. Over a decade of production and supply. Seven sizes of mice availabe: small newborn pinks up to jumbo adults. Prices start at $25 per 100. Feeders are separate in the resealable bag, not frozen together. Low shipping rates. Free price list. Kelly Haller, 4236 SE 25th Street, Topeka KS 66605, (913) 234-3358 evenings and weekends.

For sale: In stock, Flex-watt and Ultra-therm heating products. **Frozen rodents** always available. Mice: pinks–crawlers, 3/$1; weanlings, 40¢; subadult, 50¢; adults, 65¢; large adults, 75¢. Rats: small, 85¢–$1; medium, $1.25–2.00; large, $2.25–2.75; jumbo, 3/$10. Call on quantity discounts [note: discount on orders picked up at CHS meetings]. Live rodents available at higher prices. **Available now**: newsletter/catalog—many unique/hard-to-find herp husbandry items. Send business-size SASE for catalog, or call. Scott J. Michaels, D.V.M, Serpent City, P.O. Box 657, Island Lake IL 60042, (815) 363-0290.

For sale: Herp bags—colors vary, translucent ripcord nylon, super lightweight, extremely durable construction with hot corners sewn in, double seamed. Custom sizes made upon request. Sizes: 46" × 14", $7 each; 24" × 12", $6 each; 24" × 6", $5 each. Shipping fees, $1 for first bag, $.30 each additional bag. Nicole Lechowicz, 290 Warren Road, #69, Carbondale IL 62901, (618) 457-2783.

For sale: Tanks used for maintenance of aquatic turtle collection: one 36 × 18 × 18 steel frame, slate bottom, 50-gal., $35; one 93 × 25 × 28 homemade wood with drain, 250-gal., $100; one 67 × 25 × 27 homemade wood with drain, 190-gal. $75; one 76 × 12 × 48 fiberglass with drain and wooden enclosure, 180-gal., $100; two 36 × 23 × 26 fiberglass with glass front and drain, 90-gal., $200 each. Also, 0–15 lb grocery scale, $15. Phil Drajeske, 8012 Greenwood Avenue, Munster, IN 46321, (219) 838-8032.

For sale: herp books. Ditmars – *The Book of Living Reptiles*, 1936, 64 pp., illus-trated by Helene Carter, children's book, collector's item, crayon scribble on one page, otherwise in exc. cond., $30; Jenkins and Bartell – *A Field Guide to Reptiles of the Australian High Country*, 1980, 278 pp, many color photos, keys, DJ, $32; Passmore and Carruthers – *South African Frogs*, 1979, first edition with frog call record, as-new condtion, $55; Breeden, Stanley and Kay – *Australia's North*, 1975, 208 pp., many color and b & w photos, an outstanding account of Australia's tropical "Top End" including many reptiles, DJ, $45; Morris, Percy – *They Hop and Crawl*, 1944, 253 pp., $20. All books hardbound, in excellent condition unless otherwise noted. Prices postpaid. William R. Turner, 7395 S. Downing Circle W., Littleton CO 80122, (303) 795-5128.

For sale: Book Sale! *Reptiles and Amphibians of North America* (Stebbins), $20; *Breeding Reptiles and Amphibians* (Townson), $25; *Venomous Reptiles* (Minton), $12.50; *Rattlesnakes* – soft (Klauber), $10; *Reptiles of Oklahoma* (Webb), $17.50; *Reptiles and Amphibians in Britain* (Frazer), $20; *Snakes of India* (Deoras), $20; *Field Guide to Snakes of South Africa* (Fitzsimmons), $20; *Reptiles and Amphibians in Colour* (Hvass), $15; *Reptiles of the Australian High Country* (Jenkins and Bartell), $20; *Dangerous Snakes of Australia* – soft (Mirtschin and Davis), $7.50; *Amphibians and Reptiles of New England* (DeGraaf), $12.50; *Snakes of Western Australia* (Storr), $20; *Tailed Amphibians of Europe* (Steward), $22.50; *Introduction to Herpetology* – ex-lib (Goin), $10; *Checklist of North American Reptiles and Amphibians* (Schmidt), $10. Shipping, $2 for first book, $1 for each additional. Jim McDougal, 23 Rockhill Road, Rocky Point NY 11778, (516) 744-2498.

For sale: two male and two female Argentine tortoises, best offer; female Philippines sailfin lizard (*Hydrosaurus pustulosus*), long-term captive, $50; 5' female boa constrictor, c.b. '94, light coloration, excellent pattern characteristics—narrow saddles, 3 to 5 scales wide, minimal speckling, $150. Ed Stone, D.V.M., P.O. Box 55191, Madison WI 53705-8991, (608) 238-2891.

For sale: captive-bred leopard geckos, $20 each. Ron Winfrey, (616) 363-9276. [Grand Rapids MI]

For sale: c.b. geckos. New Caledonia geckos—*Rhacodactylus auriculatus*, $135 each; *R. ciliatus*, $175 each. Velvet geckos—*Oedura castelnaui*, $75 each; *O. monilis* (high yellow phase), $75 each. New, undescribed *Paroedura* sp., gets big, 6–7", nice colors and patterns, $75 each; fish-scale gecko, *Geckolepis typica*, $40–60 each; ornate day geckos, *Phelsuma ornata*, $35 each; giant day geckos, *P. madagascariensis boehmei*, $65 each; Chinese leopard geckos, *Goniurosaurus lichtenfelderi* ssp., both forms, southern China and northern Vietnam available, $200 each. Philip Tremper, P.O. Box 264, Clintonville WI 54929, (715) 823-5873.

For sale: **North Australian blue-tongued skinks** (*Tiliqua scincoides intermedia*), babies (approx. 9" and growing quickly), excellent color and pattern, great captives (tame, eat everything), litter of 18 from large female; **central bearded dragons** (*Pogona vitticeps*), babies produced from a very light-colored Toledo Zoo female hatched in 1989. Quantity discounts available on both species, call or fax for pricing. Dave Fogel, The Herp House, 1750 Haines Road, Orwell OH 44076, (216) 685-4615 telephone, (216) 685-4572 fax.

For sale: **c.b. "vittikins" bearded dragons** (*Pogona vitticeps* × *P. rankini*). Smaller than standard bearded dragons. Perfect size pets! Healthy red phase babies born 5/14/97, $30. Also **c.b. leopard gecko babies!**, normals, $20, high yellows, $25; **c.b. Jackson's chameleons**, $30. All the babies are well started and available to good homes only! See Audrey Vanderlinden at CHS or call (773) 561-9003. **NOT a commercial breeder**.

For sale: adult ball pythons, both sexes, $35 each; 7' female carpet python, $500; 3' male boa constrictor, $50; one male and one female jungle phase carpet pythons, 3–4', $800/pair; 3' male Malaysian blood python, $100; 7' female boa constrictor, $100; 3' male black pine snake, $40; 3' male speckled kingsnake, $40; adult male Mexican rosy boa, $50; adult female desert rosy boa, $50; 4' male corn snake, $50. Roger Carter, (317) 873-6561. [IN]

For sale: **Peruvian rainbow and red-tail boas**. These are the real thing! Arco Iris Herpetoculture is pleased to offer the first and only legally exported Peruvian Amazon Boidae in 20 years. Captive bred and born in Peru at the only in-country boa breeding facility in the world! **These are not from wild bred females**. For details and a 1997 price list, call Terry L. Vandeventer, Arco Iris Herpetoculture, (601) 371-7414 telephone, (601) 371-3271 fax, or E-mail <franz@teclink.net>. PLEASE NOTE THESE NEW NUMBERS.

Advertisements (cont'd)

For sale: one male and one female albino Burmese pythons (*Python molurus bivittatus*), c.b., high yellow contrast, 3 years old, $350/pair; two male and three female Indian pythons (*P. m. molurus)*, c.b., Michaels stock, 2–3 years old, to Illinois residents only, $275 each; one male and one female coastal carpet pythons (*Morelia spilota mcdowelli*), c.b. '96, Weidner stock, $300/pair; two male and two female jungle carpet pythons (*M. s. cheynei*), c.b. '95, Barker stock, $600/pair; male Malaysian red blood python (*P. curtus brongersma*), blood red breeder male, $275; male amethystine python (*Liasis amethystinus*), c.b. '96, Weidner stock, $195; one male and two female Honduran milksnakes (*Lampropeltis triangulum hondurensis*), adults, bred in 1996, $525/trio; four Honduran milksnakes (*L. t. hondurensis*), c.b. '96, $150 each; two male corn snakes (*Elaphe g. guttata*), c.b., $50 each; ten Argentine boas (*Boa constrictor occidentalis*), c.b., hand-picked, 2–3 years old, $250 each; 15 Colombian boas (*Boa constrictor* ssp.), c.b. '97, $75 each; one c.b. '96 Colombian boa (*Boa constrictor* ssp.), pick of three litters, $125; five Surinam redtail boas (*Boa constrictor* ssp.), c.b./w.c., select animals, true redtails, $300 each; one male and one female Guyanan redtails (*Boa constrictor* ssp.), c.b., Michaels stock, $600/pair; male Central American boa (*Boa constrictor imperator*), w.c., locality data (very aggressive), $125. Doug Holmes, Premiere Exotics, (309) 682-3938. [Peoria IL]

For sale: one male and one female Hog Island boas, c.b. '96, 2½–3', bright orange and pink, $425/pair; one male and two female Crawl Cay boas, c.b. '94, true dwarf boas, adults at 4', ready to breed, $2500/trio; female albino Kenyan sand boa, c.b. '96, bright orange, growing fast, and one male Kenyan sand boa, hetero for albino, c.b. '96, $1400/pair; three male and three female anerythristic Kenyan sand boas, c.b. 8/97, nice black & white, $450/pair; male diamond python, c.b. '96, black & white, gorgeous, $1950; two female Surinam redtail boas, c.b.'96, aberrant patterns (semi-striped), gogeous color, average red tails, $300 each; one male albino *ruthveni* × grayband and one hetero female, c.b. '95, from Steve Osborne, very colorful, ready to breed, $3800/pair; one male and one female, hetero for albino *ruthveni* × grayband, male c.b. '95, female c.b. '96, $1500/pair; one male and two female albino *ruthveni* × Pueblan milks, c.b. '96, from Steve Osborne, very nice, $2500/trio; one male and one female grayband kings, c.b. '95, Blair's phase, nice colors, ready to breed, $500/pair; smooth knob-tailed geckos (*Nephrurus l. laevis*), c.b. 7/97, beautiful pink/purple, $1000 each; two male and two female crested geckos (*Rhacodactyus ciliatus*), c.b. '96, breeding, nice yellow, $225 each; one male and two female *Paroedura* sp., the "new big ones," 5–6", nice colors, breeders, $375/trio. Will consider trades for adult green tree pythons, adult/subadult Cape York spotted pythons, aberrant kingsnakes/milksnakes or adult rough-scaled sand boas. Phone/fax (619) 265-7557. [San Diego]

For sale: yellow anacondas, flawless captive born babies from high contrast, docile adults, yellow with black spots, $150 each; carpet pythons, captive born babies from huge, vividly colored parents (Brian Barczyk bloodline), some of the nicest carpets you'll see, only a few left, $125 each. Mark Petros/ Strictly Serpents, (847) 854-3259 home, or (847) 854-2992 work.

For sale: '96 female "snow" southern pine, *Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus*, white with pink eyes, $900. Gary Gaziano, (510) 583-0313 evenings.

For sale: Amelanistic, anerythristic "snow" corn snakes, hatching right now, CHS pick-up available. Ken, (815) 434-5008, leave message if no answer.

For sale: male Pueblan milksnake, c.b. '93, bright color, good banding, $125; one male and one female Cal. kings, banded, aberrant pattern, 4–4½', proven breeders, $140/pair; male Kenyan sand boa, hetero for albino, 14", bright orange with partly striped neck, c.b. 11/95, $300; male Kenyan sand boa, c.b. '94, 15", bright orange, $100; Guatamalan milksnakes (*Lampropeltis triangulum abnorma*), c.b. '97, unrelated pairs available, $100 each. Tony Tallman, (319) 547-2267. [IA]

For sale: hatchling Sinaloan milksnakes expected, $30 each; breeding colony of two male and four female African fat-tailed geckos, $180 for all. Marc, (815) 293-0989.

For sale: c.b. '97 hatchling Nuevo León kingsnakes (*Lampropeltis mexicana thayeri*), $85. Also, various older adult colubrids. Henry Cohen, 24 St. Johns Place, Buffalo NY 14201, (716) 881-6724.

For sale: **Nuevo León kingsnakes**, *Lampropeltis mexicana thayeri*, c.b. '97, exceptional bloodline, mostly milksnake phase, beautiful, candy-apple red saddles with pumpkin orange-peach ground color, extra females, limited numbers, $350–400 each; male **Tarahumara mountain kingsnake**, *L. pyromelana knoblochi*, c.b. '95, well established, nice pattern, $500. Dan Vermilya, (203) 284-2091. [CT]

For sale: Premium captive-produced reptiles. **Piebald black pines**; Brazilian rainbow boas (Lamar); blonde trans-Pecos rat snakes; Baja rat snakes; gray-banded kingsnakes (Langtry); Okeetee corns; Tennessee corns (rare locality); ghost corns; melanistic garters (unusual form of melanism—male is solid black with three blue stripes and a powder-blue chin); Peruvian matamatas; Mexican redleg tarantulas. Call for free price list or just to shoot the bull. Private breeder Michael Stefani, (630) 372-3936.

For sale: 1997 hatchlings. Trans-Pecos rat snakes, Mexican hognose [permit needed in Illinois], red milksnakes, $35 each; Baird's rat snakes, prairie kings, California kings, $25 each; Mexican milksnakes, Pueblans, albino speckled kings, $50 each; *ruthveni*, $75 each; *thayeri*, graybands, Durango mountain kings, $100 each; Arizona mountain kings, $125 each. Steve Mitchener, Oklahoma City OK, (405)748-6566 after 6 P. M. Central Time.

For sale: beautiful, feeding snakes. Wholesale quantities to dealers, individual purchases welcome. Send SASE for **free** price list. Robert Applegate, P.O. Box 338, Campo CA 91906, (619) 478-5123. Also, free phone consultation on snake husbandry problems as a service to the herp community.

For sale: Send SASE to CRC, P.O. Box 0731, Las Vegas NV 89125-0731 for brochures and list of species available. Limited bookings available for guided tours of herpetological collection sites in Nevada. Call/fax (702) 471-0240. E-mail <fpglwmau@anv.net>.

Software: **TRACS**™ (the BEST SELLING record keeping and breeding program for IBM and compatibles). Quickly retrieve data such as breeding history, feeding schedules and medical records on each of your animals and use the information to improve your husbandry techniques. Just $39.95 plus $5 s&h, $10 outside the U.S. Download free demo at <http://www.leaplizard.com>. Send check, money order or credit card information to Leapin' Lizards, 23852 Pacific Coast Highway, #375, Malibu CA 90265 or call at (310) 456-3266.

Tours: Adventure tours to Madagascar! Join **Bill Love** seeing and photographing fauna and flora, heavily herp-biased, across the world's least known mini-continent. Maximum fun & photo ops assured on every trip. Contact him at: BLUE CHAMELEON VENTURES, P.O. Box 643, Alva FL 33920. TEL: (941) 728-2390, FAX: (941) 728-3276, E-MAIL: <blove@cyberstreet.com>.

Tours: **Road-riding in Costa Rica!** Treat yourself to the trip of a lifetime! Learn about tropical herps, find them, photograph them, see where they live. **Greentracks, Inc.**, offers the best herpetological tours led by internationally acclaimed herpetologists and herpetoculturists. See the Amazon, visit cloud forests, experience the world's greatest rainforest, super sunsets and good company. Call (800) 9-MONKEY.

Wanted: **hard cover/dust jacket (only)** copies of *A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Texas* by J. M. Garrett and D. G. Barker (1987, Texas Monthly Press, Austin TX). Must be in very fine or better condition. Will buy or trade other herp book(s) for one or more copies. Joe Dinardo, 16 Idlewild Road, Levittown PA 19057, (215) 946-6180 any time. Please leave message if I'm not home when you call.

Wanted: fox snakes for nature center display. Must be gorgeous and flawless, with orange heads and clear yellow ground color, eastern or western; large male Hermann's tortoises for purchase or loan (have three gorgeous females, 8–10"); jeweled lacertas, European only. Ed Stone, D.V.M., P.O. Box 55191, Madison WI 53705-8991, (608) 238-2891.

Wanted: Dickerson's collared lizards (*Crotaphytus dickersonae*), will pay top dollar for nice pair. Bob Shaw, (219) 662-0021.

Advertisements (cont'd)

Wanted: big-headed turtles; mata mata turtles; Mexican giant mud turtles (*Staurotypus triporcatus*); exceptionally large common snappers (45 lbs. & up); large alligator snappers (over 90 lbs.); spectacled caiman from Trinidad, Tobago and Surinam; dwarf caiman; smooth-fronted caiman; albino turtles (except red-eared sliders). Walt Loose, (610) 926-6028, 9:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. or after 11:30 P.M. Eastern Time.

Wanted: Styrofoam boxes, any size or shape so long as they're not flimsy, preferably with cardboard liners, willing to pay from $2 to $5. Bring to CHS meetings. Scott J. Michaels, D.V.M, Serpent City, (815) 363-0290.

Line ads in this publication are run free for CHS members — $2 per line for nonmembers. Any ad may be refused at the discretion of the Editor. Submit ads to: Michael Dloogatch, 6048 N. Lawndale Avenue, Chicago IL 60659, (773) 588-0728 evening telephone, (312) 782-2868 fax, E-mail <MADadder0@aol.com>.

Unofficial Minutes of the CHS Board Meeting, August 15, 1997

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 P.M. Board members Greg Brim, Michael Dloogatch, Ty Park and Audrey Vanderlinden were absent.

Officers' Reports

The minutes of the July Board of Directors meeting were read and accepted.

The Treasurer's Report was reviewed and accepted.

Committee Reports

Shows: The Springbrook Nature Center in Itasca is holding a nature expo on August 24 with an emphasis on water conservation. The CHS will be represented by several members at this show. The CHS will be participating in the first annual Windy City Pet Expo, hosted by the International Kennel Club, at McCormick Place the weekend of October 11–12. Those interested in displaying animals should contact Jenny Vollman. Board members Jack Schoenfelder and Jenny Picciola gave a presentation on reptiles and amphibians in pond habitats at Crystal Palace Perennials garden center in Cedar Lake, Indiana, on Saturday, July 26. Jack reported that he and Jenny were enthusiastically received by those attending the show, and that Crystal Palace Perennials showed their appreciation with a $250 contribution to the CHS and by becoming an Institutional Member of the society.

Membership Committee: Chairperson John Driscoll reported that he is compiling a list of former CHS members, with a focus on those from the local area. The Membership Committee plans to contact these former members by phone in an attempt to determine their reasons for non-renewal. A specific list of questions designed to elicit this information is being developed.

Nominating Committee: Chairperson Gino Martinez reported that a committee meeting was held on July 26, and they are well on their way to a slate for the November elections.

Old Business

Webpage: Jenny Picciola reported that the cost of obtaining a URL for two years for the CHS Webpage was not $100 as originally stated in her motion for URL application, made and accepted at the July 18, 1997, Board Meeting. The cost was actually slightly over $200, which Jenny paid out of pocket. Jack Schoenfelder moved that the CHS reimburse Jenny Picciola for costs incurred in applying for a URL and setting up a CHS Webpage, in an amount not to exceed $250. The motion was seconded by Jenny Vollman, and the vote was unanimous in favor. The new address for the CHS Webpage is <www.chicagoherp.org>.

Bulletin Boxes: Jack Schoenfelder reported that he has been in contact with a company that can provide custom labeled boxes for storage of CHS *Bulletin*s. Discussion ensued concerning potential demand for the boxes, and quantities needed to meet those demands. Ron Humbert moved that the CHS appropriate an amount not to exceed $400, for the purchase of 50 CHS *Bulletin* boxes to be made available for sale to the general membership. The motion was seconded by Jenny Vollman, and the vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Parking at general meetings: Steve Spitzer and Ron Humbert met with Cynthia Gulley of the Field Museum concerning availability of the museum's west lot for parking at our general meetings. They were told that other parking arrangements would need to be made. Steve reported that he is attempting to make arrangements with the Chicago Park District for the lot east of the museum to be made available to the CHS at a cost of $50, plus a $5 per car fee. He has yet to be contacted by the Park District regarding this matter. Ron also added that 105 people were in attendance at the July 30 general meeting.

New meeting site: Because of our parking dilemma, Ron Humbert has been seeking out new sites to which we might relocate our general meetings. Possibilities mentioned included, Morton Arboretum in Lisle, and North Park Village in Chicago. After discussing availability of the new sites, and taking into consideration our existing arrangement with the Field Museum, the general consensus of the Board was to stay at the Field Museum through 1997 and make new meeting site arrangements for 1998.

New Business

CHS youth auxiliary: The Board reviewed a written proposal

submitted by Greg Brim, outlining his ideas regarding the establishment of a youth auxiliary to the CHS. Jack Schoenfelder pointed out that just such a group had at one time been active within the CHS, and that the framework already exists. The group was called the XYZ group (an acronym for eXceptional Young Zoologists). It was established to better meet the needs and interests of younger CHS members. Further discussion on the matter was tabled until a future Board meeting, with Greg in attendance.

General meeting format: Steve Spitzer opened discussion on ideas he has had for streamlining general meetings in order to encourage better attendance. It was decided to make access to book and raffle ticket purchases, and to the library, available to members from 7 to 7:30 P.M., with the meeting to begin promptly at 7:30. There is to be a 10-minute break following the business portion of the meeting to allow members a chance to use the restrooms, or make last minute raffle ticket purchases. Book sales however, will not be an option during this shortened intermission, as the books are to be placed back in storage at 7:30. This will allow our book salesperson, Jenny Vollman, the opportunity to attend the presentation portion of the meeting. It is hoped that members will arrive earlier and take care of their book purchases, library business and socializing between 7 and 7:30 P.M. These changes should help to end our meetings earlier, thereby allowing our younger members an opportunity to attend. Earlier conclusions will also afford those members who wish to linger and socialize after the meeting more time to do so.

Skokie Animal Control: Jenny Picciola was contacted by a representative of Skokie Animal Control. They are looking to the CHS for help in placing homeless herps. Steve Spitzer will contact the facility and get more detailed information as to their requirements.

Awards committee: Jack Schoenfelder reminded those concerned that the awards committee needs to get together.

Raffle: Ron Humbert will provide a picture of a 55-gallon tank and stand to be displayed at the August 27 general meeting. Both items are to be offered as a raffle prize.

Round Table

John Driscoll mentioned that CHS membership flyers had been sent down to the Orlando Breeders Expo, and would be distributed at the Zoo Book Sales booth.

Gino Martinez requested that current CHS Board members inform him of their intentions as to running for office in the upcoming November election.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted for the Recording Secretary
by Gary Kostka

News and Announcements

NO FLYER THIS MONTH FROM ZOO BOOK SALES

There will be no flyer from Zoo Book Sales inserted in this issue of the *Bulletin*. Despite good intentions on the part of the CHS and the folks at Zoo Book Sales, the harsh realities of deadlines and such have intervened to make it impossible to put together a list this month in time to be inserted. Look for a brand new list next month. Meanwhile, the bargains offered to CHS members on the last two months' lists still hold.

MOVING??

Please let us know in plenty of time of any change in your mailing address. The *Bulletin of the Chicago Herpetological Society* is sent to our U.S. members by bulk-rate third class mail. This means that the U.S. Post Office will not forward your *Bulletin* with the rest of your mail. This is so even if you make a special request that your magazines be forwarded (such a request only applies to second class mail).

UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Chicago Herpetological Society will be held at 7:30 P.M., Wednesday, September 24, at the Field Museum of Natural History, Roosevelt Road at Lake Shore Drive, in Chicago. We are extremely fortunate this month to have as our featured speaker, **Dr. Harry W. Greene** of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California–Berkeley. Dr. Greene is the author of the new book *Snakes: The Evolution of Mystery in Nature*. This book, lavishly illustrated with superb color photographs by Michael and Patricia Fogden, has been receiving rave reviews all over — from the popular press, such as *The New York Times* and *Parade Magazine*, and from esteemed technical journals. Both artistically and scientifically it is perhaps the finest overview of snakes ever produced. Dr. Greene's talk will have the same title as the book, but in addition to some general topics from the book, Dr. Greene will speak about his field studies on black-tailed rattlesnakes.

The talk on ponds that was originally planned for the September meeting will be rescheduled for later this year or early 1998.

The speaker at the October 29 meeting will be **Randall Gray**, a private breeder from Weatherford, Texas. Randy will speak on husbandry and breeding of lizards of the genus *Uromastyx*.

We are required to use the entrance on the west side of the museum. **Last month again we were allowed to use the free parking lot to the west of the museum. Your best bet is to try that lot first before settling for the lot to the east of the museum or for the Soldier Field lot, where you may have to pay for parking. For the latest on the parking situation call our CHS message line, (773) 281-1800, before you come.** Public transportation is an option: the Roosevelt Road (12th Street) bus now goes directly to the museum, thus providing a connection with the el and subway. This bus service runs until 11 P.M.

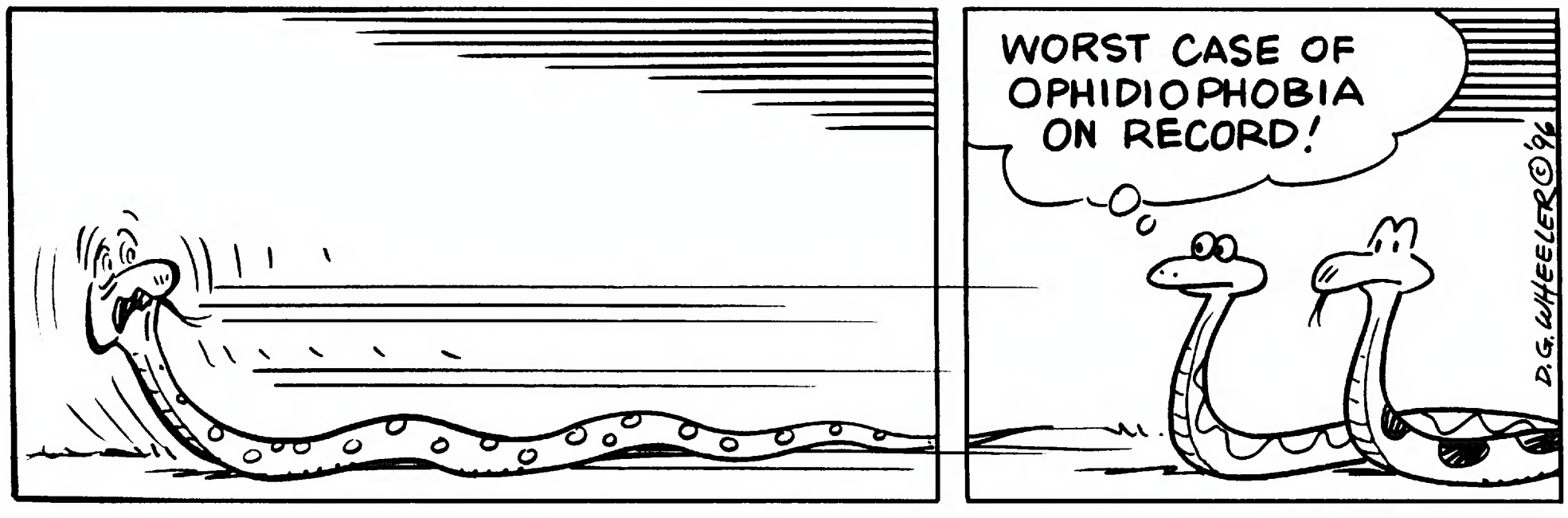
Turtle Club

The Chicago Turtle Club will meet Sunday, September 21, 1:00–3:30 P.M., at the North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski, in Chicago.

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL HERPETOLOGICAL WEEKEND — SEPTEMBER 20–21

The Chicago Academy of Sciences currently occupies temporary quarters at North Pier Chicago, 465 E. Illinois Street (just across Lake Shore Drive from Navy Pier). This will be the site for the 15th annual HerPETological Weekend put on by the CHS under the auspices of the Academy. The show will take place over the weekend of September 20–21, from 10 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. on Saturday and from Noon to 6:00 P.M. on Sunday. We urge all CHS members to bring some of their favorite animals and suitable containers in which to display them. This show provides something for everyone — CHS members who participate invariably find the experience entertaining and worthwhile; members of the Academy and the general public who attend find it entertaining and highly educational as well. Exhibitors will be able to use the freight elevator at 455 E. Illinois Street on both days for one hour before the event starts and for one hour after closing. We will again this year use the indoor Apartment Garage attached to the North Pier building. Stickers to provide free parking in this lot will be issued to volunteers and exhibitors. Please load and unload equipment and animals at the freight elevator entrance rather than bringing them through the garage. For more details phone Ron Humbert at (630) 620-7377 or Gary Fogel at (773) 935-6938.

THE ADVENTURES OF SPOT



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